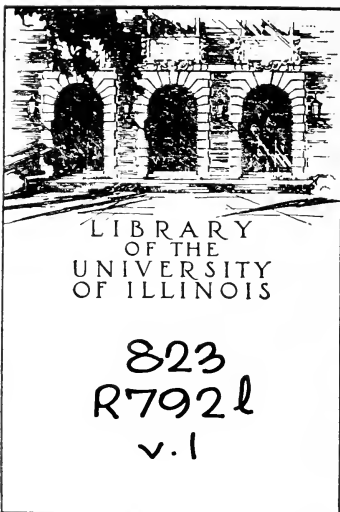


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THE LOVER'S GRAVE;

OR,

THE TRAGEDY OF MARSHEND.

A DOMESTIC TALE, FOUNDED ON FACTS.

By R. ROWLATT.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

G. BERGER, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND; AND G. ODELL,
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1840.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
VISCOUNT BURGHESH,
THIS LITTLE UNPRETENDING WORK
IS,
BY PERMISSION,
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
WITH THE MOST LIVELY GRATITUDE FOR BENEFITS
RECEIVED FROM HIM,
AND OTHER BRANCHES OF HIS NOBLE FAMILY,
BY
HIS LORDSHIP'S MOST OBEDIENT
AND HUMBLE SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH the Editor of the following narrative feels himself fully justified in sending it to the press, he deems it his duty to state, for the satisfaction of the curious reader, the manner in which it came into his possession.

It so happened that at the close of the last autumn, two friends had occasion to leave London, at the same time, to transact some business in the south of Kent; the one at Dover, the other at a town called Marshend, situated about twelve miles from it.

Avoiding the more frequented and speedier travelling Dover road, they chose that which passes through the heart of the county, conceiving that what they lost in speed, would be more than compensated for by the more beautiful and picturesque scenery, through which they should pass. After a delightful ride, they

dismounted from the coach at Marshend, about five o'clock in the afternoon. The one whose business called him to the town, purposing to remain a few days, the other to proceed on to Dover early the next morning.

As neither of the party was much attached to the comforts of a country inn, they had provided themselves with an introductory letter to an elderly lady, who kept a lodging-house at Marshend, for the accommodation of travellers; and who, from a scrupulous care for the respectability of her house, admitted few that presented themselves, unless they were recommended by her friends. As our travellers appeared before her thus happily provided, they were permitted to enter without hesitation, and soon found to their satisfaction, that the comforts and respectability of her house had not been over-rated.

After having done full honor to the eatables set before them, they sallied out for a ramble, bending their steps towards the sea-shore, which was thence distant something less than half a mile. When the day closed in, they returned to their lodgings, and purposing to be up very early on the following morning, retired to rest.

As early as half-past five, ere the sun had risen, the coach was ready to start; the two friends were there; the one in his place, the other shaking him by the hand, and making an appointment to meet him in Dover two or three days hence. The "all right" of the guard put an abrupt finish to their conversation, and caused the one who remained in the street to look somewhat amazed after the coach, as it whirled from him, feeling at the same time a strange sensation of loneliness steal over him.

What's to be done? thought he, turning and walking gently from the office; it is too early for business, and I am in no humour for study. To kill time, if for no better purpose, I'll e'en stroll up the hill to the church, which last night, when viewed in the distance, seemed to invite a more friendly acquaintance.

Up the hill, therefore, the traveller went, and after having sufficiently satisfied himself with gazing on the time-worn structure from the road, entered the burial-ground by its side. He found it a very pleasant and peaceful spot, so much so indeed, that it almost seemed to tempt him to its cold bosom, as to an asylum of

happy tranquillity. The church, and in the homely language of the country, the churchyard, is situated on the side of a hill, beneath which the town is built, in one continuous line, from east to west, stretching out to a distance of something less than a mile at its base, and thereby protected from the north wind.

At that early hour the town, with its present generation, was peaceful and quiet, as that which had passed away, and now lay mingling together beneath the traveller's feet, save that here and there might be seen an individual, with his implements of husbandry thrown carelessly over his shoulder, pacing his way to some distant scene of labour. At the distance of about half a mile to the south, lay the English channel, upon the margin of which were seen several towers and batteries; thereby rendering the descent of an enemy upon that part of the coast almost an impossibility. No such attempt at that time being expected, peace and silence reigned within and without the warlike structures; while upon the water, and within reach of their deadly guns, the fishermen in their boats were gliding about in all directions. Some just

returning from the night's labour, others preparing for the day's. Further in the distance, and apparently quiet, as its representative on canvas sailed along before the wind, on the bosom of the water, the large and majestic ship, the honored bulwark of our "sea-girt isle;" while on the opposite course, battling with wind and tide, and conquering all obstruction, was seen one of the children of philosophy, impelled onward by the mighty power of steam, ever and anon marking its arrow course with a dark quivering line of smoke, as if in its haste it had borne away a portion of the night, and was now at intervals breathing it forth again, and driving it back to its old abode of darkness; while it pressed onward, embracing and being embraced by the balmy morning air. Beyond which, and over the wide expanse, the towering and chalky hills, forming the French line of coast from Calais to Boulogne, stretched their white and rugged sides above its glassy mirror.

Withdrawing the eye from foreign land and turning to the right, it rested upon a long continuation of the hill, on which he stood, indenting the country for several miles, and half encir-

cling an extensive marsh, rich and thickly populated, at the extremity of which, in the dim and hazy distance, it again became the boundary of the channel.

Varied as was this scene, still there was nothing in it to distract the mind in its contemplation on the mansions of the dead. The eye might pass around from one object to another, but the imagination would blend them in sweet harmony together, and return soothed and tranquillized to the spot on which the traveller stood; while his tongue involuntarily exclaimed, "And must it all come to this!" A moment, and truth echoed the words, adding, "It must!"

As it was not possible to gain ingress into the church at that early hour, the traveller's attention was turned more particularly to the inscriptions on the tombstones. There were many possessing sufficient merit to arrest his progress, but one in particular struck him, as alluding to something characteristic, if not interesting. Yet, in itself, it contained no further information than that the mortal remains below were of an inhabitant of the town, who had departed this life about twenty years since; beneath which,

in italics, were engraved the two well-known lines,

*“Speak of me as I am, nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice.”*

After having wandered musingly about for some time, he returned to his lodgings, and finding his breakfast prepared, sat down and began the cheerful meal. Just at that moment his landlady entered the room, to know if he had every thing to his wish; and on learning that he had, was about to quit it to make the same inquiry elsewhere; but he, unacquainted with her active habits, and pleased with her manners, begged her, if she had not breakfasted, to sit down and partake of his; she looked pleased in return, but said she had breakfasted some time since, and indeed was very busy, and therefore hoped he would excuse her. Perceiving, however, that he looked disappointed, she continued, “But, sir, if you should want for anything which you have not by you, if you will be kind enough to ring, I will attend you.” Having said this, she remained by his side, as if undetermined how to act.

“My dear landlady,” said he, “I feel it neces-

sary to crave your pardon, for wishing to detain you, for, in truth, it arose from a selfish motive. I have been this morning," he continued, "wandering amidst the mouldering remains of the former generations of your town, and have had my attention strangely excited about an inscription which I have there met with." Having said this, he looked earnestly at her, in the hope that she would know which he meant, and be able, in some manner, to give him the application of the verse. But she knew not to which he alluded; none appeared to her more prominent or interesting than the unadorned stone which pointed out the spot where she had deposited the remains of a beloved husband, and two darling children.

Seeing this, he continued, "There is, near the upper part of the ground, by an angle in the wall, a tombstone, on which are engraved these words." He then repeated the quotation.

"The person's name was Smith," replied she, at once discerning which he meant.

"Can you tell me why those lines were placed there?" was the next inquiry.

"I can't exactly say," replied she, "I knew

Mr. Smith when alive; he was then a kind-hearted old man, but rather eccentric, and by some supposed to be a little unsettled in his mind. I have heard," she continued, "that when he was quite young, a very severe disappointment in love, caused him for some time to lose all regard for himself, and the world in which he lived; and that he did not, although in the course of time he recovered a portion of his self-possession and respect, and was married to another person, ever become the man his youth gave promise of."

"Had he any children?" enquired the traveller.

"You have observed a house built with white bricks near the sea, and surrounded with trees?" was the reply.

The traveller assented.

"In that house," continued his landlady, "his eldest son now lives; as rich and kind a hearted man as any in the town. He made his own fortune, and built that house; and thus, by his prudent conduct, retrieved the errors of his father, for whom he ever appeared to entertain the tenderest affection."

"Did you ever hear the particulars of that

love story?" said the traveller, interrupting her. "O yes, many times, sir," was the reply, and then, as if suddenly recollecting herself, she continued, "I have an old friend whom I expect to come to drink tea with me this evening; she lived in the town at the time, and was well acquainted with the parties."

"Indeed," said the traveller, "she must have reached a great age!"

"I believe she is upwards of eighty," replied the landlady, "but that she has not outlived her memory, if you will join our little party at tea, you will soon be satisfied. The love story you have alluded to, is a favourite theme with her, and I have no doubt but she will answer any questions you may wish to ask her, with pleasure."

"I shall rejoice to make one of the party," said the traveller.

This having been agreed upon, the landlady took her departure, and her guest having finished his breakfast, proceeded to transact the business which had brought him to that part of the country.

At the appointed hour in the evening, the traveller returned to his lodgings. As he went

in to join the little party. Mrs. Betts, the person spoken of, had just arrived, and was seating herself, complaining to her friends that she was afraid she should not long have the pleasure of visiting them, as the little journey was even now almost too much for her.

The stranger begged to know if she were in good health.

“Why, yes, sir,” replied she, “pretty well, I thank you, with the exception of some ugly rheumatic pains which are flying about my limbs. Ah!” sighed she, as she finally settled herself in her chair, “I can’t now get about as I did sixty years ago.” And in truth no one could look upon her and doubt her words. She appeared to have been of the middle stature, well formed, and good looking. But now a change had come over her; she was stout, and bent almost double from the effects of the rheumatism, and her features were deeply indented with the furrows of age. Yet, might it be perceived, that amidst this wreck of the body, her mind had still preserved its youth,—in that she was young and cheerful, and when grim pain was absent, apparently happy.

Of course the tombstone almost immediately became the subject of their conversation. In a short time the curious traveller heard with pleasure many particulars relating to it, of so interesting a nature, that he was led to inquire if any account of it had been ever written.

Instead of his being answered, he saw the tears gathering in the eyes of the old lady, and not knowing what it meant, or how to inquire, he sat silent, waiting patiently for her explanation.

“You see I am affected,” said she, wiping her eyes; “when you asked me if an account of it were ever written, you brought vividly to my mind the sorrows and sufferings of a kind brother, who has long been mouldering in the grave.” No one attempting to speak, after again wiping her eyes, she continued, “At the time to which the story relates, my brother was confined to his room with a lingering and incurable disease. To amuse himself he used to read a great deal, and at times to write an account of any little incident of more than ordinary interest, which occurred in the town. Thus, what I have been telling you about, be-

came a subject for his speculations, and ultimately for his pen."

"Did he die? What became of the writings?" were the eager questions of the traveller.

"Alas! he died," said Mrs. Betts, "it could not be otherwise, but his writings have been fondly kept; not so much from my knowledge of their merits, as that they serve to remind me of a brother's goodness, who when dying gave them to me, to be preserved as a memorial of his esteem and affection."

"Then you have them now?" enquired the traveller soothingly,

"I have," was the reply, "but it is a long time since I saw them. For some years I have not been able to read myself, and I never could bear to see them in any other hands than my own."

"I am sorry for that," said the traveller, "as I was thinking of begging you to let me see them."

Mrs. Betts, at hearing this, remained for some time silent. "Do you look upon them as writings fit for publication?" continued the traveller.

"Indeed sir, I have never even thought of it," was her reply.

“Then,” rejoined her questioner, “I trust you will let me see them, I do not wish to take them from your sight, and you may be assured I will not injure them.”

After a brief silence she replied to this, in a tone of deep sadness, saying, “I cannot doubt you sir—you shall see them; I have become old and infirm, and cannot hope to remain amidst these transitory scenes much longer. Why then should I refuse you what, perchance, in a few days may become a prey to hands, which, heedless of the care that I have taken of them, may commit them to the flames. You shall see them, sir—you shall see them; but use them as my dearest treasure; I would not, ere I go hence, part with them for the world’s price.”

The gratified traveller answered with many thanks, and promised to use them with the utmost possible caution.

It being thus determined that he should be favoured with their perusal, it became his object to allay the excitement which he had at first, unintentionally, kindled in her bosom; nor was it long before he, assisted by others of the party, in a great measure succeeded.

When the time arrived for her return home, her new-made friend accompanied her, with which attention she was sensibly pleased, and on entering her house introduced him into a little parlour, and begged he would excuse her for a few minutes. When she returned, she brought in her hand a large bundle, done up in canvas, and placing it on the table said, "This, sir, contains the narrative you want, but there are also some of my private papers, which some years since, when I found my eyes failing me, I separated from others of less consequence."

"It is one of these—oh, here it is!" she continued. "I know it well! Let me, my dear brother, in this, kiss you once again, and assure you that you are as dear to me in my old age as you were in my youth." Saying this, she gave him the packet, and after a few more words had passed between them, they parted for the night.

The traveller was fond of poring over old manuscript, and therefore hurrying back to his lodgings, he took a candle and retired to his room. Seating himself at the table, he undid the packet, and found it contained many different papers, each one apparently as had been stated by

Mrs. Betts, noting down some little incident which had formerly occurred in and about the town. Looking them hastily over, he took from among them the one he was most anxious to see, and was soon lost to everything else but the interest it created in his mind.

On the following day he was led to crave permission to take a copy of it, which he was readily permitted to do. The worthy woman's affection for it was not of a selfish nature; to possess the original in the hand-writing of her brother was all that she desired.

The copy, therefore, was accordingly taken, and it is that which is now presented to the public, with the earnest hope, that it will not be found altogether unworthy of attention, either as an amusing or instructive tale.

THE LOVER'S GRAVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE present year, 1769, will be long and painfully remembered in Marshend; since it has been stained with a crime unparalleled and unheard of during the life of the oldest inhabitant. For the honor of my native place, I am tempted not to note down this dreadful affair—yet, why should I hesitate? since it really has happened, and, whether noticed by me or not, will exist in tradition to its dishonor; besides I feel an inclination, nay, almost an obligation to write, that my friends may at any future time be enabled to discover how much a few years has added, or

left out, in the recitation of this very sad event. I shall, therefore, proceed to recount all that has happened, consulting my notes, which I have constantly taken from day to day, that I might not, through forgetfulness, be deprived of any portion of my former thoughts or information. Yet, ere I begin, I must beg my dear friends not to think that it is vanity alone that prompts me to write, but rather to remember my present state, and from that to judge kindly of my poor attempts to amuse myself, and pass away some very heavy hours, which, but for this amusement, might be full of complaints, repinings, and discontent.

That I may be enabled to pass regularly on with the course of events, I must leave the present time and return to the year 1764; at that period I was about twenty-one years of age, in joyous health, not regretting the past, and full of hope for the future. Edward Smith, of

whom I shall have much to say, was then in his fifteenth year, and had been articled to Mr. Layton, the architect and builder, for about twelve months; he was then a lad of much promise, rather tall of his age, of a slight figure, yet having a florid complexion, which ever wore the characteristic of cheerfulness. Mr. Layton, his master, was at that time something above fifty, of the middle height and well-made, though rather inclined to corpulency, which, afterwards sensibly increased with his years; his face was one of those, which we delight to call a true English one, full, broad and florid, bearing the stamp of generosity and truth, which no stranger could look upon without an inclination to talk with him, and eventually to be considered his friend. He was a widower, his wife having died about five years previously, by whom he had several children, but save one girl they all preceded their mother to the grave. Eliza, the

one living, had, at the time of which I write, been a few months married to a young farmer, about thirty miles distant. For some time previous to her leaving her father's house she had acted as his housekeeper, assisted by a widow woman, of the name of Thomson; who after her departure, became sole-manager. Mrs. Thomson was an active, bustling kind of a person, evidently partaking more of the animal than the poetic character; and, therefore, having little or no imagination, her mind was seldom absent from her present business, and when employed in setting the house in order, or in attending to her master's visitors, she was at the height of her ambition, and consequently did every thing in the most satisfactory manner. She, like her master, had been left with one child, a daughter, who had, up to the time of her taking the sole-management of the house, continued at school; but then, as it was necessary she should have

some one to assist her Susan, instead of being apprenticed, as had been proposed, was taken home for that purpose. She was then a fine girl, with pleasing manners, and beautiful to look upon; and had been but a short time a resident in our little town, before her loveliness became the general talk, and many young fellows there were whose ambition would have been completely gratified, at least for a time, if they could have had her company for their Sunday afternoon walk. But her mother had not passed that dangerous period of life herself, without some little trouble and anxiety, and remembering that, resolved to have her child, for the future, as completely as possible under her own eye; so that few had the pleasure of which all were so eager to obtain possession.

From living in the same house, and being much respected, Edward Smith became her constant companion. He was young as herself,

THE LOVER'S GRAVE; OR

and of course no harm was thought of their being together; although a partiality immediately began to shew itself between them, and which, as they advanced in years became, as it were, a part of their growth. I was well acquainted with both of them, and felt assured, with many other persons, more experienced than myself, that (although they were not spoken of as lovers,) they would, at some future time, be happily united together. Nothing occurred, in the slightest degree, to oppose itself to this opinion, until they had attained their eighteenth year, or were within a few days of it, when I was told that their intimacy had been suddenly and effectually interrupted by Mrs. Thomson. I was then, as my friends know, confined to my bed, but, from what I had before seen and heard, I found myself bold enough to tell my informant that it could not be, in short, that I did not believe it; nor indeed did I, although, as it afterwards proved, it was quite—nay, sadly true.

For the information of my friends, I need scarce say, that Sunday, with us, is not only employed as a day of religious rest, but also of innocent recreation. Who has not seen on its fine summer evenings each house sending forth its little family party, to inhale the healthful breezes that dwell upon the hills around. Then it is that the happy couple taste the blessings of life, while forgetful of their daily toil, and surrounded with their cherub offspring, they witness them free from all restraint, gamble in the sun as light and joyous as its brightest beam. Then is it, likewise, that the aged with a kindly eye, look on a generation which will be gay, when they are still and cold beneath the flowery turf. Then, too, the lovers, linked arm in arm, pass fondly on, recounting in mutual confidence the little troubles that beset their sphere. On such a day as this, and in such a manner, might be seen Edward and Susan leaving the town, to

take, what proved to be, the last evening's walk they should ever indulge in together. Mrs. Thomson had intended to accompany them, but she had been kept at home by her master, who just as she was going out, told her he had some business to transact which would require her presence at home. What that business was I shall shortly have to relate, but my present object is to accompany my young friends in their walk. Passing to the eastward the whole length of the principal street, they turned to the left by a small public-house, which is situated but a few yards from the commencement of a hill, that rises far above that on which the church is built, and is parted from it by a very picturesque little valley, in days of yore occupied by the sea, and no doubt forming, if there was then occasion for such a thing, a fine and safe harbour ; but now laying, at least, a mile from its former occupant, and having no other

water in its bosom than a murmuring mill-stream, on each side of which are small but very profitable meadows. To reach the fields on the right, you have to cross a little rustic stile, from which the path winds rather abruptly up the hill, so that in a few minutes, on turning, the town is seen quietly reposing beneath the line of hills, in a westerly direction, and beyond that, to the extent of many miles, a low marshy flat, studded with towns, villages and farm-houses, and apparently offering pasturage to almost innumerable flocks of cattle; while to the south dwells the noisy and ever restless sea, over which the white sails are seen to flutter, impelling through the pathless wave, the product of distant lands to and from each other.

Having gazed for a few seconds on the scene around, Edward and his lovely companion resumed their walk through meadows and corn-fields, full of promise to their grateful masters.

For some hundred of yards, near its summit, the hill rises so abruptly, that in its natural state it must have been nearly impossible for any vehicle or beast of burden to have crossed it; in consequence of which a road has been cut directly through it, by which horses with loaded waggons are enabled to ascend and descend from the surrounding country. By the side of this road, about half-way up from the bottom to the surface, a narrow path has been formed for the accommodation of the pedestrian traveller. The view, from this spot, is one of the most engaging description, and during the hours of day it is the favorite resort of many; perhaps its beauty is not a little heightened by the caution it requires to traverse it with safety. By the side of this path, while gazing on the far stretched ocean, the young couple seated themselves to enjoy the fresh glowing breeze, while resting from the toil of the ascent.

“How beautiful!” exclaimed Susan to her companion; “What a view is here! do you think,” she continued, “that there is such a view from yon distant white hills in France?”

“That I cannot say,” replied Edward, “but I should think we may fairly venture to suppose there is not one more beautiful; and, indeed, if there be, I have no inclination to seek it.”

“You are content with this?” said Susan, inquiringly.

“Being here yourself, how can you ask me such a question?” replied Edward, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. “How could I ask you, if I were not here—tell me that Edward?” rejoined his companion, laughing.

“You are too witty for me,” said Edward, “but, to be serious, you surely cannot think I could indulge in a thought of leaving you for those lonely looking hills? With whom should I enjoy my walk there?”

“O, with some pretty French girl, no doubt—but, Edward, you look as grave as a judge, nay, you will go to sleep if we remain here—come let us proceed in our walk;” saying which, with a light heart and thoughtless playfulness, she sprang from his side, his outstretched arm arrested her progress, while a cold tremor overspread his frame, for the gulf was before them, into which her very happiness seemed about to plunge her.

“If I did not look serious before,” observed Edward, “I may well look so now; you forget that the narrow path on which you stand, is but one step from destruction.”

“You are fearful,” replied Susan, laughing at her companion’s anxiety, “but come let us leave this place for a more safe and easy path.”

“Nay, Susan, you must sit down, I am tired, besides there is no danger, if we use but a little caution.”

“Now, pray don’t talk to me of caution,” she

answered, while seating herself again by his side, "my mother talks to me so much about caution that I almost hate the word, besides I do not wish to be thought over cautious; why should I not enjoy myself? Where is the caution of the birds around us? Where the caution of the sportive lambs? No, no, Edward, let us not talk of it, but enjoy ourselves in the innocence of our hearts. I was not so near falling into that ugly hole as you imagined, I did it purposely to alarm you."

"And can you find any pleasure in my alarm?"

"Why, I don't know, so pray don't ask me, for fear I should answer, yes."

"You could not, I hope you could not?" continued Edward.

"I don't know, but —— oh! what's that?" she exclaimed, starting now in earnest, alarmed by the sudden report of a gun a few yards from them, and at the same moment, a number of the gay birds, so lately alluded to, were seen scat-

tered on the earth, fluttering in the agonies of death.

"It is you that are frightened, now," said Edward, "and look," added he, pointing to the birds, "can you now admire their thoughtlessness?"

"Poor, poor birds!" said Susan, "What harm can they have done to provoke such murderous treatment?" "Doubtless," replied Edward, "the farmer finds it necessary to destroy them to protect his harvest." "It is a cruel world!" said Susan.

"I fear it is," rejoined Edward, "and that much caution is indeed required to prevent our falling into the snares of the wicked, as these poor birds have fallen within the reach of that instrument of death."

"Indeed, Edward, you should have been a preacher; I do confess it appears to me that you speak to the purpose, but I cannot bear to be

serious, therefore let us pity the poor birds, and forget them. What think you of the treat Mr. Layton purposes to give us on Wednesday?"

"I have not heard of it."

"But you will, and be invited too; we are to go up to the castle and have tea in the open air, and, if the day proves fine, a dance on the lawn."

"Perhaps I shall not be invited."

"O yes you will, or I shall be very much disappointed."

"What, if I am not there?"

"Certainly! why do you ask?"

"Can you doubt why?" said he, taking her hand, "Do you not observe that your favour has become the only thing I am really ambitious of obtaining. I know that there are many like myself, anxious to be thought kindly of by you; but Susan they cannot think of you as I do. They would follow you but for the present gratification—they think not of the long future—they do not really love you."

“And would you, Edward, persuade me that you do?”

“I would not only persuade, but convince you,” replied Edward, “if it were in my power, instead of being content, as I now must be, with the bare expression.”

“And if I were to feel that I could return your love, think you not that that would content me also? Be assured it would. I should be happy in listening to you of the future.”

“And can you be thus happy?” asked Edward.

“I think I can,” replied Susan, “if you will promise faithfully not to read me too many lectures, nor to chide me more frequently than I deserve; in short, not to do a thousand things which I may chance to disapprove of, and above all, to look always cheerful and happy.”

“Nay, nay, I cannot promise all this,” said Edward, “yet be assured your happiness shall be the chief aim of my life. You do not answer,” he continued; nor did she, but she looked

kindly and smilingly upon him—he saw it, and required no other answer; in a moment she was pressed to his bosom, as he imprinted on her rosy lips the first kiss of expressed love; after that Susan had not to complain that her companion was dull or sleepy, or inclined for preaching. How could he be otherwise than cheerful, when his heart was overflowing with happiness.

Before they returned home, they resolved that what had passed should be held a secret between themselves; even Mrs. Thomson was not to know it. “Why should she?” argued Susan, “we shall be much together, we can talk and be happy; if you speak to her, she will perhaps only throw difficulties in the way, on account of our age, or some other equally simple reason.”

“In that I will not attempt to overrule you,” replied Edward, “we are promised to each other in our own hearts, and I have all sorts of confidence in your truth.”

“But can I have in yours, Edward?”

“Would you have me swear by ——?”

“No, no, I will, like yourself, be all confidence.”

And with such like talk they wiled away the hours of evening, and returned home as happy as their young hearts could desire. Alas! that happiness was not fated to continue. But it is time for me to leave them, and to precede them home, that the reader may learn why Mr. Layton required the presence of his housekeeper on that eventful evening.

CHAPTER II.

THE old gentleman was seated in his arm-chair, in the little parlour fronting the street. He had, as we have seen, requested Mrs. Thomson not to leave the house, as he had some business to transact, and would most probably want her assistance. Yet he had now been for near two hours shut up in the little room, without books or papers. Mrs. Thomson had, like a good christian, when her little bustling work was over, taken out her Bible from its weekly resting place, and with seeming serious attention, perused a portion of its sacred lore, perhaps a sufficient portion to occupy the space of an hour; but she was no great reader, therefore it might not have been so much. Becoming weary, she arose from her chair, and walked

about the room, wondering what Mr. Layton could have wished her to remain at home for, on so fine an evening ; and then, what business he could have to transact on a Sunday. But he was still quiet ; therefore, after a few turns about the room, stirring-up the fire, sweeping the hearth, and re-arranging a few things which had got misplaced, she again sat down to her book. It was very good, it was very true, but Mrs. Thomson was not in a fit state of mind for contemplation. She closed it again, and went up stairs to the room above the one in which her master was sitting. Seating herself at the window, she insensibly became occupied in observing and criticising the dresses and appearance of her neighbours and town-folk. What she thought of such or such an one, is not for me to say ; enough, the time passed silently on, the shadows of the passengers became lengthened, the air grew cold, the sun sunk beneath

the house-tops, and the shades of evening began to spread themselves throughout the air. Still Mr. Layton was seated quietly alone in his little parlour. It was time to close the windows in the sleeping rooms. Mrs. Thomson arose—accomplished the task—and then, as a last resort, arising from her impatience and determination to know what her master was doing, went down stairs, and tapping gently at his door, enquired if he wanted the candles. After waiting some time, and no answer being returned, she ventured to enter, and in a louder key repeat the question. Now, whether Mr. Layton was asleep, or deep sunk in meditation, I will not attempt to decide; certain it is, that when Mrs. Thomson repeated her inquiry, he appeared a little startled, and eagerly looked up, as if surprised to hear it. “I did not think it was so late,” he murmured, half audibly, and then, raising his voice, said “No, Mrs.

Thomson, I do not want them yet, but —— ” He checked himself, as if uncertain what to say, at last adding “are you very busy, Mrs. Thomson?” “I was just going to shut up the house and get your tea,” replied the attentive house-keeper.

“I do not want my tea at present,” said her master, and then, after a slight pause, added, “as soon as you are at leisure, Mrs. Thomson, I should be very glad to speak with you for a few minutes.” “I will come, sir,” was the soft reply, and with that the old lady bustled from the room, intent on her household duties, but she lost no time in their performance, as she felt very anxious to learn what her master could possibly have to say. “Come in,” cried he, in answer to her tap at the door, and further on entering, at his bidding, she seated herself at the opposite side of the window; and now, thought she, I shall, at last, know what this bu-

siness is about. But Mr. Layton appeared in no mood to proceed; he was restless, and betrayed to the anxious eyes of his companion, marks of excitement on his otherwise easy, quiet countenance. She became alarmed; and, fearful that something very serious had, or was about to occur to him, began as follows:

“I fear something very unpleasant has occurred—” This was enough for her companion. he only wanted a beginning, so without waiting for her to finish the sentence she had commenced, he answered “No, Mrs. Thomson, nothing of the sort has, or is likely to occur, that I am aware of; I want to talk to you about a rather serious matter, but as it may not appear so serious to you, or to others, I am sadly puzzled how to begin.”

“I am sure, sir,” answered Mrs. Thomson, “if you have any serious business you wish to make me acquainted with, I am not a person to

make light of your kindness, or to abuse your confidence."

"I know it, I know it," ejaculated Mr. Layton, "but you know I am getting old."

Mrs. Thomson looked surprised, but answered smilingly, "With your health and strength, sir, there are few persons, I should think, who would charge you with being old; why should you think of it?"

"O, I do not wish to think of it, Mrs. Thomson," replied Mr. Layton, "but I wish to know what you would think of my age, if I were to tell you that I had some thoughts of, of, of ——."

Mrs. Thomson waited for some time, in silent expectation that he would finish the sentence, but seeing that he remained silent, ventured to say "Sir, I hope you are sufficiently master of your own actions to feel careless what any one may be pleased to say about you."

"Well, you shall hear," replied he, and as he

made a sort of a shuffle in his chair, he continued, "I have been thinking, and seriously too; yes, I have been thinking of getting married." "Married, sir!" almost screamed Mrs. Thomson, in an accent of surprise and fear.

"Yes, married; now I have got it out, I can explain myself."

"I hope, sir," said Mrs. Thomson, interrupting him, "you have no reason to complain of your house-keeping, or of the manner in which any of the duties you have intrusted to my care are performed? I am sure, sir, I am always anxious to oblige you."

"I believe it, I believe it, Mrs. Thomson," said her master, "you may rest satisfied it is not from any dissatisfaction of your proceeding that I have thought upon it."

"I should be very sorry if it were, sir," was the timid answer.

"You have no reason to be sorry," added her

master; "you will still, I hope, continue to be my housekeeper."

"When you are married, sir," replied Mrs. Thomson, "you will, perhaps, alter your mind. Marriage, sir, makes a great difference in a house, but, for my own part, I shall be always anxious to oblige you."

"I am satisfied," said Mr. Layton, "and now I will tell you who alone can be my wife." Again he became as if fearful or ashamed to express himself more fully. What a situation for Mrs. Thomson, (she herself was not much older than Mr. Layton,) should he have fixed his affections upon her! but it could not be. No, no, thought she, I am, at all events, too old for that. I have often heard him wish for a son. Well, well, I must bear to see him married, and submit myself to be ordered about by a stranger, one who will not study his comfort, or be half so careful of the house as I have been; she will

marry him for his money. I shall not like to see him imposed upon—indeed I feel that I shall not be able to bear it, so I must leave my place.

Having come to this noble resolution, she was about to tell her master how she should be obliged to act; but he saved her the trouble, for the present, by resuming his speech. Stretching out his legs to their full extent before him, and speaking as if suffering under a sense of suffocation, he said “Mrs. Thomson, if I am married, my wife will be near forty years younger than myself; what think you of that?”

“I think, sir, there will be rather too great a difference in your ages.”

“Do you not feel inclined to laugh at me?”

“No, sir, you certainly must be allowed to do as you please.

“Will not the town’s people?”

“Surely, sir, you are not a child, why should you care what any one may say about you?”

“Aye, why indeed!” said he, with almost an air of satisfaction. “And now, Mrs. Thomson, I must tell you, that the young person I have been speaking about, and on whom I have long looked with admiration and love, is no other than your daughter, my little pretty innocent Susan!”

What a change in the tide of fortune was here for Mrs. Thomson! She now, in her turn, became silent, for she was taken completely by surprise, having a moment before decided that all was lost, being well assured that the introduction of a wife would have been the death blow to her authority; what a change then to find that this wife, this dreaded stranger, was to be no other than her own daughter!

Mr. Layton seeing her hesitate, added, “you surely, Mrs. Thomson, will not refuse your consent?”

“You have taken me so by surprise,” replied Mrs. Thomson, “that I scarce know how to an-

swer, but I am sure that both myself, and Susan, ought to be very much obliged to you for your kind consideration; and if you will allow me till to-morrow morning, to think of it, I hope I shall then be prepared to answer you in a suitable manner?"

"O, certainly," said Mr. Layton, "but you will think of it kindly, as I shall never more be happy until I can call Susan my wife." By this answer it would appear that he had lost all fear of making himself ridiculous, or of being laughed at by his friends, or pointed at by his town's folk, as the doating old man with the young wife.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Edward and Susan returned home, they found Mrs. Thomson alone, her master was just gone out to meet his fellow-townsmen, at the inn, to hear the news, and pass away an hour or two in social conversation. Mrs. Thomson's heart was too full for her to continue silent without the most painful sensation, she therefore formed an excuse to send Edward out, on a message to a friend, to a distant part of the town; and he, happy in the thought of obliging the mother of Susan, listened respectfully to her desire, and in a few moments left the house for its accomplishment. As soon as they were alone, Mrs. Thomson, after motioning Susan to sit down by her side, began to question her kindly about the weather, where she had been,

who she had met, and so on; to which Susan replied in her usual lively manner, without study or hesitation, as the thought presented itself to her mind. There was nothing new in this, it was customary for Mrs. Thomson to inquire about such things; but, after a short time, Susan noticed something more particular than general in her questions, and therewith began to fear that her mother had some knowledge of what had passed between her and Edward, though how she could even suspect it, she had no means of guessing. It had been her anxious wish that her mother should not, for the present, be made acquainted with her sentiments towards Edward.—This wish, I must stop to remark, for the information of my young readers, was both foolish and unnatural. All children ought ever to bear in mind, and females in particular, that any thoughts they may wish to indulge in, unknown to their parents, are conse-

quently improper, and must, in the common course of things, lead them into much perplexity, if not into irredeemable misery; and hence it follows, that thoughts, which with a parent's knowledge may be safely indulged in, are, if cherished in secret, full of mischief, and threaten at the best to give a false bias to the mind, and thereby prepare it for greater improprieties. But, although Susan had inconsiderately fallen into this error, when she thought her mother suspected her love, and the engagement she had entered into with Edward, she had too much regard for truth, to think of using any further disguise. No sooner, however, had these thoughts been aroused in her mind, than they hastily gave way to others. Her mother began to hint something of love and marriage, and after some time having cautiously approached her subject, she at last spoke out, to the no small surprise and disappointment of her daughter.

“You know, Susan,” said Mrs. Thomson, “I have always felt and acted towards you as an affectionate mother; it is not becoming in me to say what privations I have suffered, or what difficulties encountered for your sake, but that such things have occurred, be assured, and also that I have borne them all for your good.”

“You are my very dear mother,” said Susan, playfully, “and are doubtless very fond of the object of your care.”

“I would I could indeed be so,” said Mrs. Thomson.

“Why, what have I done?” asked Susan in a more serious tone; her mother did not answer, and she continued, “I know you often talk to me of thoughtlessness and indiscretion, perhaps I treat your cautions too lightly, but I hope you do not suspect me wanting in affection towards you.” “No, never, my dear child,” said her mother, and having kissed her, to make the assu-

rance more perfect, she continued "no, Susan, I love you much, too well, to indulge in such suspicions; but I want you to be very serious to-night, for I have something of consequence to tell you, and something in which you are deeply concerned, and will be at once called upon for an answer."

"I shall not hesitate to give it, if the subject be not above my comprehension," said Susan.

"I have told you," continued her mother, "that it has fallen to my lot to have much trouble, and many disappointments to contend with during my past life; but even my sorrow arising out of those I have been able to turn to your advantage, since it has given me experience to teach you, what to avoid, and what to cling to. I have, thank God, enjoyed a good state of health, and do so at present, but I cannot disguise from myself that I am getting into years."

"My dear mother," said Susan, laughing, "you

surely do not wish to be set up for an old woman!" "Life is uncertain," replied Mrs. Thomson, "what I ever pray for, is, that I might live to see you married, and settled comfortably in the world."

"And you have been kindly looking out a husband for me?" said Susan, half seriously.

"Your youth," replied her mother, "has given me scarce occasion for that; my charge thus far has rather been to teach you to be guarded against the snares of the wicked and ungodly; but now another duty, unsought for, has devolved upon me." "Surely no one has been so kind as to make me an offer!" said Susan, jestingly.

"Do not treat the subject so lightly, Susan," replied her mother, "when I have told you who the person is that has made the offer, you will be sensible, that if you cannot make him happy with your love, you ought at least to treat his proposal with respect."

“I am all anxiety to know who the kind gallant is,” replied Susan, still striving to appear cheerful, though her voice betrayed her heart was not at rest.

“I cannot pretend to say that he is young, or handsome,” continued her mother, “but I can say with truth, that I know no man on earth who has a more kind or generous heart—need I add that I am speaking of Mr. Layton.”

“Mr. Layton!” cried Susan, in the utmost surprise, “you surely are laughing at me as a punishment for my thoughtlessness!”

“No, my dear child, I am not,” replied her mother, “I am telling you the plain simple truth; I am not surprised at your doubts—two hours since I should have doubted it myself.”

“And has the proposal been only made this evening?” asked Susan.

“I had not an idea of his purpose when you went out,” replied her mother; “you know he

wished me not to leave the house, and you may guess my surprise at discovering the cause."

"And just this evening too!" said Susan; "it is very strange!" she added in a tone of voice, far different from its usual music.

Her mother looked at her with a tearful eye, anxiously eager to catch her answer. She had persuaded herself she would leave it entirely to her child to determine. Happy, happy indeed had it been for her, had she adhered to that resolution! But I will not anticipate.

Susan sat for some minutes almost motionless, without answering a word, while her beautiful features successively assumed all the various shades from the bright scarlet rose to the pale lily. At length her mother, willing to hear her sentiments before they were disturbed, begged her not to be afraid of speaking what she thought about it; whereupon Susan took courage, and replied, that however willing she might be to oblige her

mother, and however tempting in a worldly point of view the match might appear, she could not consent to it, adding, she had the greatest esteem and respect for Mr. Layton, but that she never could feel that love for him which would justify her in becoming his wife.

Her mother did not speak, but she looked upon her daughter—and that look was full of disappointment. Susan saw it, and continued, “you look surprised, my dear mother, but I have to tell you, not only that I cannot love him, but also that I have this very evening let my tongue witness that I have bestowed my heart upon another; but hear me, my dear mother, I did not mean to take any rash step without your consent.”

“Have you not already done it,” asked Mrs. Thomson, with some bitterness, “to confess your love, without first consulting me? Do you call it not being rash?” “I did hope you would not consider it so,” replied Susan, “I thought you had

observed how much Edward was attached to me." "Edward attached to you! Do you mean that you have been pledging yourself to him?"

Susan, in the very innocency of her heart, answered "yes," and began to argue that she had often heard her mother speak very much in his praise, and that it could not be denied but that he was very steady, and ——" "Nonsense!" said her mother, "how could I suspect anything between you and Edward? I have spoken of him only as a good and attentive lad, not as a young man fit to become your husband! You know he is but an apprentice, and if he were not, he could scarce earn enough to support himself, much more a wife!"

"I do not know that we need be in a hurry," said Susan, very innocently, "we can wait until he can do something better."

"Nonsense, girl!" said Mrs. Thomson, in a tone of anger; then stopping to take breath, she added more kindly, "I do not wish to speak to

you again to-night about Mr. Layton, but I must beg you will at once and for ever dismiss from your mind all this trash about Edward."

"It would be very wrong I think," replied Susan, "to promise what I feel I could not perform; but if you will let me speak to him when he comes in, I will tell him that you do not approve of our love, and then if he is willing to forget me, I promise you I will endeavour to think no more about him."

"No," said Mrs. Thomson, "I do not wish you to make any promises to-night; go to bed and think of what I have said, and then, if in the morning you have altered your mind, I shall be the happiest of mothers, otherwise perchance the most miserable."

"I will endeavour to approve myself your affectionate daughter," replied Susan.

"I do not doubt it," said Mrs. Thomson, and with that she kissed the burning cheeks of her child, and bade her good night.

CHAPTER IV.

IN due time the tranquil hours of night passed away, and the morning sun, as was his wont, again peered smilingly into the bed-room of Mrs. Thomson; but he saw her not in her usual spirits, in truth she was weary and restless, for she had passed the hours of darkness in unsatisfactory meditation on her future prospects. That there was a great disparity between the age of her daughter and Mr. Layton she knew full well—too well for her, to think of disguising it from herself, much more from her daughter; but then he was possessed of house and land, and sufficient money, she doubted not, to make them comfortable for life; and then, she was his house-keeper, and had a very comfortable place; of course, if he married Susan she would not be worse off;

but how, if on hearing her refusal he should determine (as is too often the case with the disappointed lover,) to marry some one else. This idea was fraught with mischief, and thus her master's love, which at first seemed to promise so much gratification to herself and Susan, seemed now to threaten nothing but confusion: and, turning her thoughts towards Edward, only added to her perplexities. She could not deny but he was very steady, and after some consideration and remarks upon his attention to Susan, was led to admit, that he might fancy himself very fond of her—still he was young, and there was much reason to doubt whether he would be always able to withstand the temptation to evil. But, even supposing he did remain steady, his youth would be a sufficient reason for her to refuse her consent to their union, at least for some years to come. Thus passed the night, and thus came the morning, without showing her any escape

from her troubles, unless indeed the mind of her daughter should have undergone a change during its continuance. Such, however, not proving to have been the case, she was obliged to see Mr. Layton, and give him a very unsatisfactory answer; he could not be deceived; he complained of his sufferings, and would not be satisfied until she had promised to use her utmost authority to overcome her daughter's scruples.

What motive Mrs. Thomson had in her silence does not appear, but it is necessary to remark, that at that time she did not acquaint Mr. Layton with the fact that Edward was his rival in her daughter's affections; perhaps she hoped in a few days to be able to reason her out of her unfortunate attachment. With how much zeal she set about endeavouring to accomplish her object, her after repentance would lead one to form an idea. Alas! that she should have in any degree succeeded.

Susan did not leave her room that morning until much later than usual, indeed not until Edward had become seriously alarmed about the cause, therefore his first question on meeting her was respecting her health. Being assured that she was quite well, he said "I am afraid, Susan, you are deceiving me, for you look very pale, perhaps your walk last night was rather too much for you; and you went to bed, Susan, without bidding me good night."

"I am afraid," said Susan, not appearing to notice the last sentence, "that we were much too happy last night, and that I promised you too much." "How? Can you so soon repent of your kindness, Susan?" inquired Edward, in a tone of surprise and agitation. "No, Edward," replied Susan, "I do not, I cannot repent, for I feel that my heart is entirely yours; but my mother disapproves of our love."

"How knew she ought of it?" hastily rejoined

Edward, "what eaves-dropper, what busy-body, has been endeavouring to do us mischief?"

"You have no one to complain of for such a meanness," replied Susan despondingly, "no, it is to fate alone that our misfortune is to be attributed."

"Do not talk of fate," said Edward, "it is an ill sounding word; and, if what is understood by it, can exist in the councils of an all-wise Providence, it is by far too high a theme for us to handle. I know," he continued, "it is a common word in the mouths of many; but believe me, Susan, those who use it most, do so, rather with a view to disguise their idleness, than for any belief they have in its existence."

"Do you think so, Edward?" asked Susan, doubtfully. "Nay, Susan," replied Edward, "I do not charge you with idleness, I only wish you to bear in mind that no evil can approach us, but through the instrumentality of some earthly

agent. Consider, if your mother has learnt what passed between us last night, is it not plain that some one must have told her, and with a free-will to do it, or to leave it undone; how is it possible that fate could direct the action?"

"You will then be angry to learn that I told her myself," said Susan.

"You told her," echoed Edward, adding, half reproachfully, after a moment's silence, "I thought, Susan, you told me last night, that it was your most earnest desire she should not be made acquainted with it for the present."

"I confess I did," replied Susan, "but indeed, Edward, I was almost obliged to tell her."

Edward repeated the word "almost!" and then added quickly, "but Susan I am not angry, I will not be angry, I will believe you acted for the best, and, although disappointment may for a time hover over us, we shall in the end be happy. It is easy to conceive your mother may think she

has much reason to be displeased with our proceeding, she may think we are too young and giddy, to be long attached to each other; but it shall be my business, by my actions and attentive behaviour towards her, to obtain her present kind consideration, and ultimate consent to our marriage."

"I am afraid you are too sanguine," said Susan, smiling through the tears that glistened in her eyes. "Why too sanguine?" asked Edward. "will not my employment place me in a respectable station in life? and, what with the kindness of my friends, and the fruits of my own patient industry, may I not hope that in a few years I shall have the means, and sufficient experience, to set up in business for myself? but above all, do I not love you? and am I not by you equally beloved? How then can I be too sanguine? Nay, dearest Susan, I shall grow more and more so every day while thus cheered onward."

"I do not in any way doubt your intention or abilities," said Susan; "but, Edward, there is one thing you seem entirely to forget!"

"Pray do not look so serious, Susan," replied her lover, "but tell me what it is?"

"Does it follow," asked Susan, "that if my mother disapproves of our intimacy, it must be, as you have concluded, entirely on account of our age; cannot you imagine that another cause may exist?"

"What mean you?" enquired Edward, and a shade of gloom overspread his fine countenance as he asked the question. "You are silent," he continued, "I beseech you, dearest Susan, tell me what you mean? for be assured that I fear nothing but a rival in your affections."

"And should my mother desire such a thing —" began Susan.

"You would not consent!" exclaimed Edward, interrupting her, "I am sure you would

not!" and again, and again he repeated the words with all the warmth and self-satisfaction of youth, and then added, "but tell me, Susan, is such the cause, or are you trifling with me? Pray let me know the truth, that I may be determined how to act?"

"Indeed I am not trifling," answered Susan, "and yet I scarce know how to tell you; the idea is so hateful to me." After being silent for a few moments, she continued, "last evening, Edward, when we returned home so happy, I little thought what a miserable night would follow. After my mother had sent you out, and I was left alone with her, I discovered that she had done it purposely to obtain an opportunity to tell me, that some one had been during the evening to ask her permission to be allowed to propose to me."

"She refused him?" said Edward, eagerly, "you are mine, you must be mine; she must have refused him?"

“You forget, Edward,” observed Susan, “that even if my mother could have approved of our union at that time, she was unacquainted with our desire for it.”

“I did indeed forget,” replied the devoted Edward, “the very fear of losing you makes me almost beside myself—tell me what did you say to her?”

“I answered her in the best manner my surprise would allow me,” said Susan, “I told her I could not do as she seemed to desire, and when she pressed me for my reason, I told her what had just passed between us, and how impossible it was for me to alter my sentiments.”

“Kind, kind, generous-hearted girl!” cried Edward, imprinting on her lips a kiss of affection, “but you have not told me who your lover is, and how much I have to fear from your mother, and ——” the sentence was left unfinished, for at that moment Mrs. Thomson entered the room,

and, observing Edward, desired to know, with an unusual degree of sharpness in her manner, "if he had nothing better to do than to be idling his time away there?" Adding that Mr. Layton was inquiring for him in the office. Edward left the room without a word; he would have spoken, but Susan, fearing that at that time it would only irritate her mother, motioned him to go in silence. As soon as Mrs. Thomson supposed he was out of hearing, she began to talk about undutifulness and ingratitude; but seeing the big tears standing in the eyes of her child she was softened, and said with kindness, "perhaps I ought not to blame you, but in truth I am so perplexed that I scarce know how to act," saying this, she wiped her eyes, and Susan for the first time perceived that they had been full of tears.

"My dear mother," said she, "why are you thus grieved? I am sure Mr. Layton has too good a heart to act ungenerously towards you on my account."

Whatever fear Mrs. Thomson might secretly have to the contrary, it was evidently her interest, for the progress of her heart's desire, to speak in his praise, she therefore replied, "my child, I am not grieved for myself, I know he is too good to resent any wilfulness of yours towards him, upon me; but when I see him wretched and unhappy, and know that you are the cause of his being so, I should ill disguise my feelings could I lead you to suppose I should not grieve for him."

"My dearest mother," said Susan, "I cannot think you will have occasion to grieve in such a cause, for I have ever understood that the disconsolate lover is only to be found in thoughtless youth and childish old men: surely Mr. Layton has too much good sense to be classed with either of them."

"I know not," said Mrs Thomson with an air of despondency, "disappointment changes the

nature of men very much; there may be much to fear should you continue in your present resolution."

"And can my dear mother," inquired Susan, with much emotion, "wish me to alter it, when she knows that my heart and happiness are really concerned in adhering to it?"

"You are young, Susan," replied her mother, "and through inexperience mistake the shadow for the substance. Believe me, your love for Edward, which you think so sincere and lasting, is only a childish passion, light and fantastic as a dream. I would have you rational and thoughtful for your future welfare."

"My dear mother," said Susan, "I shall be very sorry to see you grieve, but I cannot help expressing my firm belief that all you can say, either in anger or kindness, will not make me feel less partiality for Edward; yet, for your happiness, I am ready to give you my word that I will never become his wife without your consent."

“Susan, Susan !” said her mother, “ your thoughts are full of rashness, but come, let us argue the matter without anger or deception. Suppose I did approve of your intimacy with Edward, I could not for many, very many reasons consent to your marriage for some years; with Mr. Layton the case is very different, yet I would not attempt to persuade you to the match, but that I am satisfied he is very fond of you, and ——— ”

“ Pray do not talk to me about it,” interposed Susan. “ This is both ungenerous and ungrateful,” said her mother ; “ what has Edward done, that even in conversation he is to be preferred before Mr. Layton? From which have we received the greater benefits? Can there be a doubt, or a shadow of a doubt, about the answer? Do we not owe every thing to Mr. Layton ?”

“ Pray do not call me ungrateful,” said Susan, with the tears streaming from her eyes, for indeed,

indeed, I am not ; my heart is full of acknowledgment to the goodness of Mr. Layton : it throbs towards him as to a father or a kind benefactor ; but—”

“ Well, well,” said her mother, interrupting her, “ if you feel all this, it surely cannot harm you much to listen to what I have to say.”

“ Mother !” sobbed Susan, “ I could listen to you all day with untiring pleasure, if you would speak of his goodness as you ever did until last night.”

“ I was not aware,” said her mother, “ that I had adopted any new method in speaking of his goodness.”

“ I mean,” again sobbed Susan, “ if you did not couple it with that proposal which sounds so hateful to me.”

“ Hateful ! Susan,” said her mother, in a tone of surprise.

Perhaps Susan had spoken out rather plainer

than she intended, as she did not repeat the word; but, wiping her eyes, walked towards the window, as if struggling to overcome her excitement.

After observing her a short time in silence, her mother approached her, and taking her by the hand, said kindly, "Come, come, Susan, you will think better of this."

"If I am wrong," replied Susan, kissing her mother, "I hope I shall."

"That you were wrong," observed her mother, "in applying such a word in any manner to Mr. Layton, I will not attempt to prove, as your own heart must convince you; and I am persuaded it would do more than that, if you did not think Edward was very much attached to you."

"Alas! perhaps it might," replied Susan doubtfully.

"Consider then," replied her mother, "is it

not possible that Mr. Layton may be as much attached to you as Edward is? And can there be any justice in paying so much regard to the feelings of one, while you so totally disregard those of the other?"

"If I thought," said Susan, "that Mr. Layton's disappointment would be anything like Edward's, I should be very heartless to think of him without pity."

"To convince you," replied her mother, "I think I need mention no more of what I have observed in him, than that this morning when I told him what you desired me, he was almost like a distracted man, and wanted to come and throw himself at your feet; nor could I prevent him but by promising to come and talk to you again."

"And can you still persuade me to this marriage?" inquired Susan.

"I will answer your question, Susan," re-

plied her mother, "by asking you if you have advanced any argument against it?"

"I cannot argue;" said Susan, "but, my dearest mother, if you could feel as I do, I am sure you would be convinced that an argument might be offered."

"Can you not conceive," said her mother, "that I have felt as you do? Nay, I will confess that, at your age, I acted even as you would act now, and that I lived to see my folly."

"Your folly?" said Susan, inquiringly.

"Yes!" replied her mother. "I can call it nothing better than folly; for the fine picture that my fancy had drawn of my future happiness, I soon found was a fiction."

"Yet you did not live unhappily with my father?" said Susan.

"No! he was very good and kind to me;" said her mother, "but yet there were a thou-

sand hopes in which I had indulged before marriage, that were never realized. I used to think, when a girl, as you do now—that if I could have the man I loved, I could live on bread and water without complaining; but I soon found it was all nonsense.”

“But you cannot tell what misery you escaped in not being disappointed,” said Susan.

“I can only judge by others,” replied her mother. “I have seen many as eager to marry their first love, as it is called, as I was—and, being disappointed in their object, have married others, and become the gayest of the gay.”

“In company?” asked Susan.

“Certainly!” replied her mother.

“And when alone?” asked Susan.

Mrs. Thomson did not hear, or rather, did not answer the question until it was again repeated. As I stated once before, she was not

blessed with a very lively imagination, and therefore, perhaps, was not able to answer with truth and satisfaction to herself, from the fact of her never having lived much in the society of the persons she described; and never having once been able to imagine what sort of a person she would have been—how very different from her present self, had her first entrance into the world been chequered with the seeds of disappointment, scattered abroad in her heart, to produce in after years a load of heart-sick misery, not to be shaken off but by death.—Such persons are the gayest in company.

“And when alone?” asked Susan.

“And why not alone, as well as in company?” replied Mrs. Thomson, after some hesitation. “For instance, is not a person like Mr. Layton, with a kind, generous heart, a good business, and well respected in the town, and indeed, everywhere where he is known, well qualified

to make any woman happy? It is true he is much older than you are, but, can you suppose he would on that account be less fond, or treat you the less kindly? It is not likely that his love would have the playfulness of a boy about it; but, if at first it proved less violent, I am persuaded that it would be more constant and lasting. Come, my child;" she continued, in a coaxing tone, "Come, you will think of this; you will consider of your future station in the town; and how happy I should be to see you on an equality with the first tradesmen around us."

"I have told you," said Susan, "that I cannot love Mr. Layton; but your happiness is very dear to me, and I think I could sacrifice every thing but my heart to please you."

"Well!" replied her mother, relapsing into a tone of anger; "I shall leave you to think and consider. I have done my duty, both towards you and my kind master. If you per-

sist in your own wilfulness, on your head rest the consequences; I shall not live long to upbraid you with your folly."

"I hope you will not have occasion to upbraid me;" said Susan, struggling to restrain her tears.

"I hope not, Susan," rejoined her mother, and left the room.

Susan watched the departure of her mother, with something like an undutiful satisfaction; but, alas! her peace of mind did not return. Her heart was full of strange emotions, that alarmed and frightened her; and, fearful that her mother might return to re-commence her persecutions, she rushed to her own room, and having secured the door, vainly hoped that her bosom would soon be freed from every sordid thought, and restored to the tranquility of yesternight.

I have said that Susan was attached to Ed-

ward, and I believe at that time she loved him—not as her mother wished to persuade her, through the agency of a mere fickle, childish passion; but with that fervency of soul, which fills to bursting the awakened heart of womanhood. But, alas! how few in such a situation are proof against the arguments her mother had continually to advance. She could not but be sensible that her marriage with Mr. Layton would give her a consequence in the town, very flattering to her pride. In this the circumstance itself had a natural tendency to undermine the moral rectitude of her heart. How blindly, then, did her mother argue to improve such a tendency—Without supposing the sense of religion and morality blotted from the mind of the young female, if she be led to doubt their efficacy but ever so little, how dreadful is the scene presented to our view! In appearance she certainly is

the same as before ; but where shall we seek for the spring of her actions? Surely not in her own sense of right and wrong ; when she has been taught to doubt the most heavenly faculty of the soul—conscience ! How then is she to be guarded against running into all sorts of errors? Will the censure of a surface-seeing world be enough to guide her through its many mazes, or keep her faltering steps in the path of virtue? No ! let her be taught to scorn the voice of conscience, and the fear of shame will soon cease to operate upon her mind, at least, in its most essential form—self-condemnation.

It is true a base fear of the world may induce her to cover her depraved thoughts with the cloak of hypocrisy ; but, can this wish to be thought good, better the condition of her heart? Nay, doth it not rather tend to greater depravity? since, by practising it, she grows

into the belief that if she can hide her faults from the eyes of the world, she has nothing to fear? How different must this feeling be from that arising from the innocent heart of youth, when the sentiments of love and friendship, glowing with truth, burst unrestrained from the lips. What mother, having a daughter, could wish her to exchange such thoughts for selfish, worldly ones? And yet, alas! doth not daily experience bid us rather ask the question of, What mother would not?

CHAPTER V.

MRS. THOMSON fearing that time would only strengthen Susan's partiality for Edward, on thinking over the matter again, deemed it her duty to inform Mr. Layton of this obstacle to the consummation of his happiness.

Her master, though surprised and amazed, listened to her with the most patient attention. It opened to his eyes a scene which had not once crossed his imagination; nor did he appear to wish to disguise from his informant how far he thought it might go in opposition to his wishes; yet, at the same time he was ashamed to express his fear for so contemptible a rival. "The lad!" he began, "What can he want with love? What has he to support a wife with? Surely there will be plenty of

time for him to think of such matters some dozen years hence ? We must take measures to prevent his folly from growing upon him. I am indeed very much indebted to you for your confidence and attention. You say that you only became acquainted with it this morning."

"Last night, sir," replied Mrs. Thomson.

"Aye ! last night—I forgot;" resumed he, "but you have no reason to think their courtship is of any long standing?"

"On the contrary, sir, I think last night was the first of it."

"Very unfortunate that you were not with them ; it would then, perhaps, never have taken place."

"Perhaps not;" said Mrs. Thomson, "but you know, sir, it was your wish that I should remain at home."

"O yes, I do not deny it : I know it was all my own fault ; but we must endeavour to mend

it now. You must not allow Susan to throw herself away in such a manner. I suppose Edward is not aware of what has been proposed on my part?"

"I found him talking to Susan this morning;" replied Mrs. Thomson, "but I do not think she has told him that."

"You will be good enough," said Mr. Layton, in an imploring tone, "to avoid letting them meet again this morning. I was thinking of sending Edward out to-day, to collect a bill or two; perhaps, I may now find it necessary to send him to a distance that will keep him from home for two or three days; during which time I trust we shall be able to come to some final arrangement. Do you not think I may hope as much?"

"What I can do, sir," said Mrs. Thomson confidently, "be assured I will do, to render you happy, and to obtain so much good for my silly girl."

“I depend entirely on you,” rejoined her master. “You will think in what manner it is best to proceed with her; in the meantime, I will send Edward away;” and he left Mrs. Thomson, fully bent on his purpose.

Edward listened to his master’s instructions, little suspecting the cause of their origin; and, as he appeared very anxious for him to set off, lost no time in the necessary preparation for his journey. As he had no idea of Mr. Layton’s design upon Susan, so also had he no suspicion that he was employed on the present occasion for any other than its ordinary ostensible purpose. He had long enjoyed his master’s confidence to its fullest extent; and, consequently, had been previously many times employed on a like errand. The only thing that disappointed him, and chequered his happiness on the present occasion, arose from the fact of his not being able to get an

opportunity of again speaking to Susan alone. Her mother was now very civil to him; but, continually, though apparently undesignedly, in the way. He perceived too plainly that she was favourable to whoever his hated rival might be; still, he knew that Susan must be the mistress of her own actions; and, had she not assured him of her unalterable love, to doubt that she could, in the course of a few days, be wrought upon to love him less, or even to think one jot differently of him, never once entered his head: all that he feared was, that she would be persecuted, and made unhappy on his account—and hence he would, had he been possessed of empires, have freely yielded them up, could he thereby have purchased a few minutes conversation with her, to sympathize with her, and talk of the happiness their affectionate constancy would garner up in their hearts, to be enjoyed in the hopeful future, as

a recompence for their present little perplexities. Having made the attempt several times to speak to her, but having been, by the presence of her mother, as many times defeated in his object, he was at last compelled to give it up as hopeless, and content himself with a homely "Good bye;"—alas! little suspecting that he should never meet her again under similar circumstances, or hear her unalterable assurance of love renewed.

Mr. Layton, not willing to leave anything to chance, after seriously considering with Mrs. Thomson what was best to be done, came to the resolution of sending Susan into the country to a trusty friend of his own; thereby at once to assure himself that all further opportunity for an increase of friendship between herself and Edward, would be, for the present at least, entirely broken off. It must not be supposed that he could resolve on

this course, without suffering a degree of pain not easily to be described. Dissimilar as their ages were, he felt the utmost affection for Susan; though, compared with him she was a mere child. The present opposition only tended to increase his passion, and render her presence almost necessary to his existence. Yet prudence so clearly pointed out the folly of keeping her at home, while Edward was an inmate of his house, that, for the security of his future happiness, he could not hesitate to sacrifice her presence in its present equivocal application to his comfort.

It was, therefore, determined that she should, before the return of Edward, be sent away. Mrs. Thomson had no objection to offer to any proposal her master made; for she had become so impressed with the immense advantage the marriage would prove to her daughter, that she willingly fell in with his views to obtain

his object—almost regardless of the means his selfishness compelled him to adopt.

Susan, though in part suspecting why this offer of a holiday was now made to her, appeared not altogether averse to it. Perhaps she thought of it only as a child—of the fine things she would see and have; or, it may be, that she thought she should thereby at once avoid the temptations her mother had to offer against her keeping faith with Edward, and her consequent anger at their rejection; though it has always appeared to me, that her motive in accepting the invitation was of a more calculating nature.

It is to be observed that I am not writing a tale of fiction. The Susan of this little history is not a faultless heroine of romance, but a fine, handsome girl—full of all the weakness and fallibility that human nature is subject to. Who can doubt, then, but that the pernicious

arguments of her mother had some weight with her? How was it possible for her to hear them so often repeated, without reflection? Perhaps this reflection, however, had she been left to herself, might have proved sufficient to re-assure her that the promptings of her own fond heart would prove her best guide to happiness; but she was not alone, and all became confusion. She had been told that what appeared to her to promise in its result contentment and happiness, was but a vague passion—a mere *ignis fatuus*—a glimmering of reason not to be depended on—and this, too, by her mother—one to whom she believed she was as dear as her own heart's blood. Which, with an affectionate, dutiful heart, could she most readily suspect?—her mother's experience, or the whisperings of her own heart? Judging from the result, it does not appear to me that, at that time, she was willing to suspect

either. The moral rectitude of her heart had been assailed; she knew not truth, or what to doubt, or what to believe. It, therefore, appears probable that she embraced the offer of a holiday with a degree of pleasure scarcely to be expected in her situation; vainly hoping that she should be able at a distance to recover her wonted spirits; and with understanding to determine on the future actions of her life.

CHAPTER VI.

THE spot fixed upon for the visit of Susan was about fifteen miles from her home, at a moderate sized farm house, situated at the extremity of a village. Its principal inmates were a mother and son. The mother, an elderly woman, about sixty years of age; the son, who managed the business for her, a healthy, robust man, about thirty. They were considered very good farmers; so that, of course, there were several servants kept, in and about the house. Mr. Hayling (Hayling was the family name), the father, when alive, had been a particular friend of Mr. Layton's; indeed, it may be said, that a degree of intimacy and friendship had existed between them that would not have been unbecoming in brothers. At the time of Susan's

visit he had been dead three or four years; yet the same degree of intimacy continued to exist between the families as during his life-time. Mrs. Hayling was a particularly kind-hearted woman, and one who, after her husband's death, when she had occasion to mention his name, never did so without tears of regret gathering in her eyes.

Charles Hayling, the son, had, in his early years, been very much indulged; he being their only child, all their fondness and affections were lavished unsparingly upon him. Yet, alas! as is too often the case, he grew up in habits anything but those such treatment and examples seemed to promise. In short, at the age of twenty, he was not only the grief of his parents, but the terror of the surrounding neighbourhood. Those who had sons were very anxious that they should avoid his company; while with many it was a crime for

their daughters to be seen speaking to him; not that he had been guilty of any atrocious crime, but that those with whom he chose to resort had for years established for themselves the unenviable distinction of being notoriously bad characters; and by whom, it was whispered by many, that, although Charles Hayling was so young, he was looked up to as their chief. His father would often, with tears in his eyes, talk to him, and point out the ultimate consequences that such evil company must bestow on whoever should indulge in it. But such caution came too late; the boy that might have been corrected, and won from his waywardness, was now too old for such correction, and too insensible to be awed by his father's words, even though accompanied with tears: late and uncertain became his hours of returning home to rest; and many times, for nights' together, in sleepless affliction, his hapless parents

mourned his absence, not wotting where he was, but fearing every moment to be aroused with the announcement that some dire calamity had befallen him. They could but weep, and pray for his amendment, for, as for attempting to exercise any authority to produce it, they knew too well it would be useless, and feared to drive him entirely from the shelter of their roof.

Thus, for some years, at the expense of his own constitution, and his parent's happiness, heedless of all the good examples around him, the son progressed in his depravity. But at a time when by his well-wishers he had been long given up as a lost character, and even his parents, when thinking of him, dreaded to speak of the future, he suddenly gave indications of becoming an altered man.

An accident of the most frightful description, which hurled one of his boon companions from his side into a premature grave, was generally sup-

posed to have been made the means, in the hands of Providence, to arouse him to a full sense of his own awful situation. But it will not be supposed that his parents were half so curious as to the cause as they were rejoiced at the effects which ensued.

With a degree of satisfaction, scarcely to be expressed, they saw him return home of a night much more early than he had long been accustomed to do, and in a state of mind bordering on sadness bid them good night, and retire to his room. His intimacy with many low unprincipled characters, from this time, began sensibly to decline; so sensibly, that in the course of a few months it appeared his study to avoid them altogether.

It was soon admitted, not only by his friends, but by the inhabitants of the village generally, that he was very much altered; and many young persons, from being no longer, by their parents, or their own sense of propriety, interdicted his

company, appeared desirous of his friendship; but, he treated their advances with coldness, and, as others thought, with contempt, which had the effect of keeping him as much alone as ever.

He appeared fully sensible that his company had once been shunned, and whether from shame, bashfulness, or a less worthy motive, he showed no anxiety that he desired the future should be different from the past. He was in consequence looked upon as a solitary, thoughtful, and by some, ill-natured man, not half so much changed at heart, as his altered mode of life seemed to imply; of course his parents were not of this number, they saw nothing in his silence but a noble sorrow for his past follies.

The farm, which he had entirely neglected, now received from him the utmost attention; so that at his father's death he was able to undertake, and by his mother readily entrusted with, its entire management; and he did not prove

himself unworthy of the trust reposed in him; while his behaviour to her was full of consideration and kindness.

I have deemed it necessary to enter into these particulars though they may appear to be little needed, as being unconnected with my story; but events that occurred to Susan at this place, and which too strongly coloured the remainder of her days are to be narrated, in which the said Charles Hayling will be found to act so considerable a part, that it was necessary that the reader should in some manner be made acquainted with his previous character. It was said by some persons, and credited by many, that he had been disappointed in obtaining the object of his early affection. That a virtuous daughter of one of his dissolute companions, the one who has been mentioned as having met with an untimely end, had scorned his love and taunted him with the baseness of his life, and although

he was the son of a farmer, and also passionately attached to her, had most emphatically refused to become his wife, and, despite her father's brutal threats of what he would do if she persisted to reject his friend, had spoken and acted with such a constancy of purpose against it, yet with the meekness and respect of a child when opposing a parent's wish, that he could in no wise bring her to consent to his desires, though continually buoying up the mind of his friend with the certainty that he would do it. This being the state of the case, at her father's sudden death Charles saw with that, his last ray of hope depart for ever.

I do not give this as truth, but I think there is a great degree of probability attached to it, from the little notice he took of females ever afterwards.

In the morning of the day on which Susan arrived at the farm, Mrs. Hayling received a

letter from Mr. Layton, making her acquainted with her visit, and begging her to treat her kindly for his sake. Then entering more fully into the matter, he made his friend acquainted with his intentions towards Susan, and begged her to improve, by all the means in her power, any good impression his kindness might make upon the mind of his soul's idol.

This letter was not read by Mrs. Hayling without surprise or pain, not that she was aware of Susan's love for Edward, but that she never had approved of such unequal matches. "How," she would say, "can a man expect to be loved by a woman young enough to be his own child?" But Mr. Layton was her friend, and moreover, had been the friend of her husband, and if he chose to act in so inconsiderate a manner it was not for her to school him for his folly; she, therefore, prepared to receive her visiter in the most friendly and welcome

manner, so that when she arrived every thing that could concern her comfort was in the best possible order.

Mr. Layton, knowing the almost dislike that Charles Hayling had for female society, did not once, even for a moment, dream that he had anything to fear on his account; of this he had given proof by forwarding a letter to him, in which he had particularized more fully on the occasion and intention of Susan's visit. The intimacy which he had discovered to exist between her and his apprentice, was set forth at large, and, closely connected with it, his firm determination to put an end to it. In conclusion, he begged his friend not to lose an opportunity, should any occur, of rendering Edward as ridiculous in her eyes as possible. Alas! he little thought the spirit he was invoking to his assistance, or the misery he was preparing for her he thought he loved.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the afternoon of the day on which Susan left her home, Edward returned to it; he had accomplished the task he was employed upon, agreeable to his instructions, and little doubted but it would prove satisfactory to his master. With the sanguine spirit of youth, during his absence, he had continually pictured before his eyes the form of his beloved Susan.

He was satisfied he possessed her heart, and his whole thought and study was, how he could render it happy.

Did he dream of disappointment, or of losing her, a death-like chillness fell upon his spirits, but a moment's hope served to warm them into life, as the integrity and constancy of his own heart chiseled out the model of her devotion to him.

Having reached home, and given his master a satisfactory explanation with respect to the business on which he had been sent, he was much surprised and hurt at not seeing his beloved Susan ready to greet him with her cheering smiles. On meeting Mrs. Thomson, and having first made inquiries respecting her own health, he ventured to ask after Susan's.

"Oh, she is quite well," was the ready reply.

"I began to fear she was ill," resumed Edward, in as uninterested a manner as he could possibly assume. "She is not at home," said Mrs. Thomson, in a tone well calculated to put a stop to all further questions. Edward, supposing she was only gone out to visit an acquaintance in the town, curbed in his impatience, and proceeded quietly to his ordinary occupation.

The afternoon drew slowly to a close—the evening advanced—it grew late, still she did not return. He might have gone out, but he staid,

lest by so doing he should miss her; the latest hour he had ever known her to be out alone, came and passed. He began to be seriously alarmed for her safety—something thought he must surely have happened to her. He hinted his fears to Mrs. Thomson, when she told him, with seeming unconcern, that Susan was not in Marshend, but gone on a visit into the country for a few days. In a moment, surprise and doubt were depicted on his countenance. Is this, a contrivance to part us, was the question self-engendered in his mind. He struggled to disguise his fears, while with all the calmness he could command, he inquired where she was gone.

“There are reasons,” said Mrs. Thomson in her former tone, “which at present make it necessary to keep it secret.”

His worst fears were realized, and he asked no more questions. She had made her voice a

discord to his ears ; so, taking up his lighted candle, with a tremulous accent he bade her “ Good night,” and proceeded to his bed-room, to vent his disappointment in tears.

As he left the room, Mrs. Thomson’s eyes were upon him, and she half murmured to herself, “ Poor fellow, how unhappy he thinks himself; and, yet, in a few days, we shall see it all forgotten. Changing, ever changing, is the mind of youth.”

“ You are right, Mrs. Thomson,” said Mr. Layton, who just at the moment happened to come into the room; “ the mind of youth is ever changing; and blessed is the mother who seeks to provide for a daughter’s happiness in something more substantial than its fleeting passions.”

“ You are very good, sir,” was the reply.

“ And how does Edward seem to bear his disappointment?” asked Mr. Layton.

“Why, sir, as you might expect; when I told him Susan was out on a visit, and refused to tell him where, he looked very uncomfortable; but he is gone to bed, and I dare say will awake well enough in the morning.”

“I am very glad, very glad indeed, to hear you say so.” And with that, the house having been secured, they each proceeded to their separate rooms, alike to dream of fallacies.

I will not venture to remark how Edward spent that, to him, eventful night—whether in the sleepless agony of despair, or the fond dreams of hope. On the next morning he was seen in his office as usual, busily engaged in copying some architectural designs, which he had borrowed from a friend.

It has often struck me as strange, that, considering the easy terms Edward was on with his master, that he never opened his heart to him about the object of his secret thoughts,

and begged him to exert his good offices with her mother for their mutual happiness. Doubtless, those only possessed of a like spirit, and placed in a similar situation can perfectly understand his silence. However, the knowledge is common to all, that, be the object whatsoever it may, on which the ardent mind of youth becomes concentrated, it enshrines it with such dear—such unearthly imaginings, that it becomes absolutely painful to hear it spoken of in the business-like manner, in which the aged are too apt to indulge, when talking to young persons of passions which they themselves once keenly felt, but which they are now eager to forget that they were ever weak enough to writhe under. It is, therefore, possible that Edward might have feared his master would take up the matter, in some such uncongenial manner. Or, perhaps, he went on, from day to day, feeding on that hope which has been so bountifully meted out to youth, to

still his excited but unsatisfied passions, trusting, that some fortunate event would occur to make it unnecessary for him to strengthen his cause with the interference of any one.

There can be no doubt that his situation did not warrant his acting offensively. Making, therefore, a virtue of necessity, he continued to go quietly on in the routine of his business, endeavouring to conceal the emotions of his heart from those who were too closely observing him. Yet, despite all his caution, neither Mrs. Thomson, nor his jealous and too selfish master, failed to observe that a great change had, and was daily taking place in him, in direct opposition to their hopes to the contrary.

Partly from pride, and partly from a dread of being quizzed, Edward had secretly resolved to shun observation, by avoiding his friends and acquaintances as much as possible. But, in forming this resolution, he had failed to remark,

that by removing himself so entirely from the conversation and amusements of those around him, he should thereby give them full scope to imply that his thoughts were fully and completely taken up by one engrossing subject. What that subject was, can it be for a moment doubted that Mrs. Thompson, or his master, remained in ignorance? Thus then, his overcarefulness to shun observation, caused the same measures to be adopted towards him, as if his disappointment had taken a noisy or inquisitive turn.

Day followed day, and the family affairs were discussed as usual by Mr. Layton and his housekeeper, seemingly careless of his presence; nor did they appear to avoid mentioning the name of his beloved Susan, yet it was in so casual and uninteresting a manner, that he could never learn aught from such conversations. At times he would endeavour to lead them insensibly on

to mention the place of her holiday abode ; but such endeavours never failed to end in his vexation and disappointment. In the course of time, without being scarce aware of it, he yielded himself up to almost absolute silence, never taking part in their conversation, unless when duty or business obliged him to do so. And so reserved had he become to the town'speople, that it was the general talk of how much he was altered, while some, by accident more deeply versed in his feelings, whispered as he passed them, how desperately he was in love.

At the close of each busy day, the evening became dedicated to a solitary walk of hopeful musing ; for, amidst all his disappointment and vexation, it was something to know that he was beloved by his dear Susan. And that he was loved ardently and sincerely as he loved her, he never once doubted, for the echo of her own sweet voice still sounded in his ears, the blest—the all-satisfying assurance.

The thoughtless and gay, on reading this, may perhaps feel inclined to laugh at him, for not acting a more manly—more determined part; but they should remember, that he was but an apprentice, entirely at the mercy of his master, as his beloved Susan was also at her mother's; and that to have entered the lists against them, while so circumstanced, would have proved but the prelude to his own discomfiture, without, in the slightest degree, advancing his interest with Susan.

He could but perceive, although he had not the slightest idea that his master was his rival, that Mrs. Thomson had done much of late to win him to her confidence, and sometimes he even doubted whether he was not acquainted with the real cause of Susan's absence.

Therefore, although at first sight it may appear he acted a coward's part, a very little attention to his real situation suffices to prove

that he did no such thing ; but, on the contrary, that he acted in the most thoughtful, manly, and determined manner, any one in his circumstances could have done.

In less than two years, argued he to himself, I shall be freed from this thralldom, and commence a life independent of control. I have read and heard of many, who through frugal habits, joined to much study and attention to their duties, have been enabled early in life to commence business, and to conduct it to a prosperous issue ; and why may I not do the same ? “ Bear witness, heaven,” said he, raising his eyes to the starry firmament, “ if sobriety, industry, and study, will do it, how earnestly I will set about its accomplishment. Yes, Susan, I feel—I know we shall be happy. Be thou but true—yet why should I say it ? Can I, for a moment, think that a few days absence—nay, months or years, can in aught blunt your fondness for me !

Forgive the false thought, dear, dear Susan, I feel that not even death itself can part us ! You are mine—wedded to me in the sight of heaven, with the approval of your own virgin heart. I feel that nothing can quench my love, and as firmly believe in the sincerity and constancy of thine.”

Thus would Edward comfort himself in secret, with pictures of the happy future ; and thereby obtain for the present lonely hours of night, in place of restlessness, a tranquil and refreshing sleep.

He had never been one of those thoughtless youths, who having never troubled themselves with half an hour’s thought or self examination, have a multitude of acquaintance, without so much as one sober thoughtful friend amongst the number, whose time is taken up in talking nonsense, and arguing without so much as the weight of a single hair to argue upon ; who live

like butterflies that flutter from flower to flower, without being able to distinguish so much as one colour from another; careless of all things but the present time, and their own pleasurable sensations, until the winter's frost seizes them in its unrelenting grasp—hence it has been justly said, that death, even in old age, rushes untimely upon the vain and thoughtless.

Edward had long loved to indulge his mind in contemplation, and his tongue in arguing on a theme ever beautiful and present to his senses.

“The mysterious simplicity of nature.”

This budding of the mental faculties, and love of study, had been observed by his friends when he was a mere child; and it became their care to promote its development, rather with a view to the quality, than the quantity of fruit it should bring forth in the coming years of its maturity. This will, doubtless, in a great measure, account for the beautiful sentiments of love

and friendship which filled his heart, as also for the devotion to truth and justice of his understanding.

Before I was cast upon a bed of sickness by my present grievous malady, I spent many hours in his company, and I can truly say, I ever found him a pleasant and sensible companion. When it pleased God to afflict me, before trouble had cast its chilly shroud upon his mind, he used often to visit me, in company with a youth of about his own age, named Henry Sheldrake, who was also, like himself, in the midst of his apprenticeship.

I observed, with pleasure, that they treated each other almost like brothers—I say with pleasure, because I clearly saw that their minds were constituted as if for the express purpose of being closely united in the bonds of a rational and lasting friendship.

Yet, sincere as their attachment had been, and

much as they had been voluntarily together, Edward, for some time after Susan's departure, in his shyness of company, appeared even desirous of shunning him. But, as days and weeks passed on, and he had in some manner argued himself into patient resignation, he became less careful of escaping his notice.

Henry Sheldrake was the son of a respectable farmer, who lived about seven miles from Marshend. He being a younger son, and the farm not being of sufficient magnitude to keep the rising family in idleness, his father determined that he should learn a trade. The choice having been left to the youth, he fixed upon that of a book-binder and stationer, at which he continued to work contentedly and happy, frequently, as an opportunity offered itself, running over, as he said, to see how all was going on at home.

Near two months had elapsed from Susan's

departure, without Edward's having been able to discover where she had been removed to. Of this he had often spoken and complained to his friend; but at the same time had comforted himself that she was—she must be, equally anxious as himself, and, as he well knew she was aware of his address, he was willing to be persuaded that she was acting with a degree of caution perfectly consistent with their situation.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was on the evening of a Sunday, in the month of August, when Edward, indulging in a solitary walk, reached that spot where he had first tasted perfect happiness—where he had first openly and fervently breathed his passion to Susan, and where his secret hopes had expanded into the blest assurance of mutual love.

Seating himself on the green bank, he began seriously to think whether Susan was justified in her long continued silence; and if she were not, what other cause could have prevented her from communicating with him. Was there not a probability that she might be persuaded that he knew where to address her if he felt disposed, and might she not, therefore, be waiting as impatiently, as himself, for a letter. This was a

question not easily, or rashly, to be replied to; a thousand times in various ways it was repeated, yet repeated to be answered in a similar way as at first. He could not tell why he had not heard from her, but he was satisfied she would be true to him, as he was to her.

From these perplexing thoughts he was aroused by his friend Henry, whom chance had directed that way, on his return from his day at home with his father. Edward was not a little surprised at seeing him, as it was some time before he had looked for his return, nor was he less so, to observe, that he wore not that face of unwrinkled care, which he was ever happy to remark in his friend, although, it often served to remind him, the more severely, of his own unhappiness.

“Ah, Edward! what at the old spot and the old thoughts again!” began Henry, but was instantly checked by his friend’s inquiries,

whether he were not well, or whether anything unpleasant had occurred to his friends, that caused him to look so unusually serious.

“ You forget,” replied Henry, “ that I have had a long walk, and may fairly be supposed to be a little tired.”

“ I have often seen you returning from the same walk before,” observed Edward, “ but never saw you look half so sadly in my life !”

“ Go on,” said Henry, “ I suppose you thought if you did not attack me, that I should you, and therefore were determined to make the onset ; but be assured, with thanks for your inquiries, that I am quite well.”

“ And your friends ?” added Edward.

“ They are in health,” replied his companion, “ but something out of spirits to-day, which may, perhaps, account for my looking a little more serious than usual—but come along and you shall hear all about it.”

“ You remember,” began Henry, “ that I told you my brother Thomas, like yourself, the last time I saw him, was complaining sadly about the interested interference of parents, with their children’s happiness. Thomas, you know, has long loved and been beloved by Mary Elgar, the only child of my father’s nearest neighbour— Miser Elgar, as he is usually called. What my father might have done, had Mary been a poor labourer’s daughter, I cannot say ; but as it was, he never seemed to know anything of what was going on between them, and they, in consequence, were not shy of him.

“ But with her father, it was a very different affair, and I verily believe that my brother would by him, as soon have been seen in company with all the rogues in the kingdom, as with his daughter. I need, therefore, scarce say, that they were very anxious to keep the old gentleman in total ignorance of their love. Not

but Thomas is a respectable fellow enough for any farmer's daughter, but Mary's father looked forward to something more than respectability for her. Besides, my brother has long had the misfortune to labour under his displeasure, approaching to hatred, for having, when a mere boy, expressed his opinion rather too plainly of the old gentleman, and which some good natured friend was kind enough to repeat to him."

"But what is all this to lead to?" exclaimed Edward, "Is the miser dead?"

"No, it is on Mary," replied Henry, mournfully, "that death is likely to lay his chilly hand."

"On Mary!" echoed Edward, "do you say that Mary is dead?"

"No, I do not say she is dead," replied his companion, "but, alas! I fear she cannot live many hours longer."

"Mary die—the youthful, the healthy Mary!" said Edward, "It cannot be—you trifle with me."

“Indeed, I do not,” replied his companion, in his former mournful tone; “yet it is not her mere death that will prove the most shocking part of the story.”

“In God’s name,” asked Edward, “what can be more shocking?”

“The manner,” replied Henry, and he spoke in such a tremulously subdued tone of grief, that his companion looked upon him, in mute astonishment, unable to utter a word; while he continued, “you know, Edward, I have not been home before for the last fortnight, during which time what I am about to relate has taken place.

“One evening, I know not exactly which, my brother had, by appointment, met his dear Mary, and was enjoying one of those stolen interviews of mutual pleasure, which are enhanced in value by being attended with fear of discovery; when fate, assisted by some ill-natured person,

brought her father within ear shot of their words. Enraged, even to fury, at finding what had been but a vague suspicion, realized in truth, he rushed upon the lovers, and with the handle of his heavy riding whip, struck my brother a violent blow upon the head, which felled him senseless to the earth.

“Mary, though surprised and terrified, almost to death, had yet sufficient presence of mind to endeavour to save her prostrated lover from further violence. She well knew the effects of her father’s passion, or rather madness, when excited against others, but had no fear that he would attempt to injure her. With this conviction, she threw herself upon the body of her apparently lifeless lover, to shield him from the upraised arm of her infuriated father. But he saw her not, or, seeing her, would not stay the blow; so that, that which was intended for my brother, fell upon his daughter, from the effects of

which, she is now threatened with a premature grave."

"Dreadful!" muttered Edward, with a shudder, and then added quickly, as if desirous of further information, "And your brother—"

"He was but stunned," continued his companion; "at the moment the whip fell upon Mary, he became conscious of his situation, and having freed himself from her close embrace, as we read, the tiger springs upon his prey, so sprang he upon the unnatural and brutal father.

"The old man, as you may suppose, stood but as a reed against him, with one effort the whip was wrenched from his hand, and in a moment he lay wallowing in the mire. I do not believe that my brother struck him, but rather that he fell from the effects of his struggle to retain the whip. Foaming with rage, he recovered his legs, but, not deeming it safe to assail his youthful adversary, he ran from the spot, bestowing as he went

his deep eternal curses upon him. As my brother saw he had nothing further to fear from the passion of the baffled father, he was enabled to bestow his undivided attention upon Mary, who lay writhing in agony, insensible at his feet. Fortunately there happened to be a clear stream of water at hand, which was instantly taken advantage of, to bathe her lips and temples; but it was sometime before she betrayed a word of consciousness, and when at last she did, her lover was grieved to observe, that it was accompanied with a degree of wildness, such as he had never seen any one exhibit before. With all the gentleness his excitement permitted him to use, he strove to comfort her as he led her towards his father's house, deeming it better, in her present state of alarm, to take her there, than suffer her to return home. But they were near a mile from the house, which distance they had not passed half over, when they were overtaken by

her father, accompanied by several other persons, who had been induced to follow him from his raving declaration, that a villain was running away with his darling child; and by whom, merely for persuading her to return home, he had been furiously attacked and brutally ill-used. When they came up with the fugitives, a few minutes served to convince them of the falsehood of the old man's story, and they accordingly refused to interfere. But he had gained his point, for although they would not take part with him, he felt assured that they would restrain my brother's violence, should he be urged, by his passion, to attempt anything against him. Assuming, therefore, all the authority a parent is allowed to possess over his child, he paraded, with confidence, all the injuries he had, or was likely to be subjected to on his daughter's account, and insisted that she should instantly return home with him. But Mary, much to his annoyance,

seemed only to imagine that further violence was intended towards her lover; and, therefore, without making any answer to his angry request, clung the more earnestly to my brother.

“Mr. Elgar seeing this, and having the violence of his passion held in check by the presence of those around, assumed a different position. Bursting into tears, like a child, he gave way to all kind of extravagant speeches, ever and anon in an imploring tone, demanding of his daughter if she would forsake her poor old father.

“Recovering sufficient reason to perceive that the tumult of her father's anger had passed away, Mary no longer resisted his importunities; but, expressed her satisfaction to do as he desired. As she thus withdrew herself from my brother's protection, he felt that he had no power to detain her; but he still had her arm linked in his own, and in that manner he pro-

ceeded with her towards her father's house, endeavouring to whisper words of comfort in her ear. Her father, however, although he could not part them on the instant, was too watchful to let anything pass between them which he did not hear; but, until he saw his daughter safely lodged under his roof, he gave no further evidence of the passion that was gnawing at his heart. Then again it burst forth anew; for, on my brother attempting to follow Mary in, he stood in the door-way, and roughly forbad him admittance, concluding by calling him many ill names, and, with an emphatic declaration, that, should he ever attempt to enter his door he would shoot him through the heart.

“This renewed intemperance brought some mutual friends to interfere, who, having cautioned the father against using any such violence, persuaded my brother to return home

with them, by telling him how little he could advance his cause by staying ; and that it would be far better to give the old man time to cool and consider of the step he had taken, ere he took any means to convince him of its injustice and folly.

“Overcome by their argument, or, perhaps, rather by his own feelings, my brother returned home, but too much agitated to speak to any one about it. The next morning, however, he made my father acquainted with the particulars of the sad occurrence, who readily promised to use his interest with Mr. Elgar for the mutual happiness of their children, and with this promise he went directly over to visit him.

“What passed between them I do not know, further than that it was far from being in accordance with the lover's desire ; for my father, though one of the most generous and even tempered of men, returned a short time after-

terwards, flushed and angry, and told Thomas it was beneath him to think anything more of Mary, since her father had proved himself the most selfish, ungenerous, and brutal man he had ever met with. My brother listened to this in silence, not daring to ask a question or offer a remark, lest it should provoke his father, in his just resentment, to interdict him from ever thinking of his injured Mary again.

“Being thus left to himself, and, knowing how little Mary partook of the ungenerous spirit of her father, he used every exertion to see her. Meantime she was kept a close prisoner in the house, the bottom part of which was kept constantly shut up, so that it appeared to the eye anything rather than an inhabited farm-house.

“Hour after hour he now passed concealed in its vicinity, ready to take advantage of the slightest chance which might offer itself for his unobserved ingress. In the beginning of last

week, while thus occupied, he was surprised and alarmed at observing Mr. Blair, the doctor, ride up to the house, and obtain instant admission. He well knew Mr. Elgar would not have had him called in, unless something serious had or was likely to occur; as he had almost as much dread of a doctor's bill as he had of death itself. Trembling with excitement, my brother remained stationary until he observed Mr. Blair leave the house; then, creeping from his hiding-place, he hastened after him, resolved, if possible, to ascertain the cause of his visit. But, as he thought it advisable to get some distance from the house before he made the attempt, he ran along a bye-path which crossed some fields, and led into the road again about half a mile distant, in the expectation of reaching the spot before Mr. Blair had passed it. From this circumstance, or some other equally unfortunate, he missed him. But as he was too much ex-

cited to return home unsatisfied, he determined, after waiting until all hope of meeting him had left his bosom, to walk directly over to Mr. Blair's house, and, if he were not at home, to await his coming ; which he accordingly did—but, with how much impatience, I will not attempt to describe.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Now, Mr. Blair, though a doctor, is a very kind-hearted man. He had found Mary confined to her bed in a state of delirium; and a very few questions served to convince him of the desperation of her case, if his prescriptions were to consist of mere medicine. From her symptoms he felt assured that some sad event had occurred, which had not only destroyed the healthy tone of her body, but threatened also to annihilate her reason.

“ To this effect he spoke to her father, and said, that before he could pronounce an opinion as to the way in which her disease might terminate, it was absolutely necessary for him to ascertain the cause of her excitement. As might have been expected, her father did not

tell him, nor suffer him to learn from her attendants—on each of whom he had laid the most solemn injunction of secrecy. After prescribing what was necessary for her immediate treatment, Mr. Blair left the house, determined to learn, if possible, in the neighbourhood, if anything extraordinary had occurred to the farmer or his child. It was for this very purpose that he had gone into a labourer's house near at hand, which occasioned my brother to miss him. Of course, what he was enabled to learn there, was but a mere sketch of what had happened; but it was enough to satisfy him of the correctness of his previous opinion, and to give him a clue to further discovery, whereby he might be the better enabled to contend with the disease of his distressed patient.

“It was very fortunate for my brother that Mr. Blair had taken such an interest in the fate

of Mary; for, on his arriving at home, and finding one there awaiting his return, so able to give him every information respecting the cause of her excitement, he received him with the utmost kindness; and freely, but feelingly, told him the state in which he had found her. After they had been some time together, and Mr. Blair had listened with the utmost patience to the many doubts and fears which my brother had to speak of, he assured him that he would exert his utmost skill to restore Mary to health; and that, with the blessing of God, he did not doubt but he should succeed. At the same time, he thought it necessary to caution her lover, in the most impressive manner, not to use any means unknown to him to see her; ending with the assurance, that should he succeed in any such attempt, the shock arising from it, in her present state, would, in all probability, be attended with the most serious and distressing result.

“To all my brother’s inquiries about the nature of her disease, Mr. Blair seemed only to answer evasively, till at last he confessed he had not had sufficient time to discover, not having known anything of her previous habits or state of mind when there in the morning. He then again begged my brother, as he valued his own and Mary’s happiness, not to attempt to see her, as, considering the great dislike her father had to him, he could not expect to enter the house without raising a whirlwind of passion, the effect of which might render it unnecessary for him to pay even another visit.

“After thanking Mr. Blair a thousand times for his kindness, my brother took his leave of him, convinced, very much against his inclination, that the best possible course he could pursue would be to attend strictly to his directions. Accident, however, soon decided that it should be otherwise ; for, as he was leaving the town, he was met by a messenger from Mr. Elgar, begging

him to come instantly to his house, as both he and Mary were very poorly.

“The person who brought this message, knew nothing more about it, than that he had heard Mary had been taken very ill the night before; and since which time her father had been running about the house like a madman; alternately abusing his child for her obstinacy—vowing vengeance against my brother—and following the threat up, almost in the same breath, with curses on his own head for his cruel folly towards them. After Mr. Blair had left the house, having pronounced Mary in a very dangerous state, her father had become more violent than ever, so much so, that his servants were obliged to use force to get him from her room, where he had fallen down almost as delirious as herself. After some time, becoming a little more calm, he dispatched the messenger in all haste for my brother. Why

he wished to see him no one could tell; but, no one suspecting it was in anger, they were all eager that he should come as quick as possible.

“Thomas was too much excited by the suddenness of the request—too eager to get to the house by any means in his power, to hold any consultation about its advisability. In a moment all his proper resolution to resist going was given to the wind, and with it the remembrance of the disinterested and kind counsels of the doctor.

“As an arrow from a bow, he almost flew to the house, without so much as allowing himself time for one moment’s preparation for the expected interview.

“Mr. Elgar received him at the door in sullen silence; but, before his guest could remark upon it, he clasped his hands together, and exclaimed, ‘Poor Mary! we have killed her—she is dying!’ ‘O, do not say so!’ cried Thomas, with a heart

bursting with grief. 'Say so, or not,' exclaimed the old man, with the energy of madness, 'it is a fact! She is already dead to me, for I cannot save her; but, come,' he continued, seizing his guest by the arm—'come, come, she shall be yours; and the gold, and the farm—all, all shall be yours, if you can bid her live. Come, come, you shall see her. You shall tell her, she may be happy, since she will not listen to me.' So saying, he dragged his half-resisting companion towards the bed-side of his daughter, which, when they reached, a yell of horror burst from the father's lips—for the bed was unoccupied.

"The curiosity of the attendant having been excited, she had left the room a few minutes before, to listen to what was passing between her master and my brother, when the patient, in her delirium, had risen from her bed, and passing down stairs, left the house unperceived.

“The old man, seeing she was gone, continued to gaze for a few moments on his companion with a most woe-begone countenance ; then, giving a deep groan, he fell senseless on the floor. My brother staid not to comfort him ; but, as if by instinct, rushed down the stairs, and through the door, which he found open, little less distracted than she who had passed it a few minutes before.

“Some labourers, who were at work in a field at a little distance, were the first to see Mary after she had left the house, and being attracted by her strange dress and manner, were preparing to follow her, when Thomas came up with them for the purpose of making inquiries. Observing the direction of their eyes he staid not for a word, but rushed onward. In a moment he saw the object of his pursuit, and but for a moment—for, in the next, the river that runs all joyously along, received her in its cold embrace.

“Whether she had a consciousness of the action she was about to commit, or whether she were not sensible of her danger, you may well suppose my brother staid not to consider. On reaching the bank, he discovered that, supported by the buoyancy of her dress, she had floated some distance down the stream; but it appeared that every moment threatened to take her from his sight for ever. After running along the margin of the river, until he came opposite to her, he plunged in, just in time to rescue her from a watery grave; but not from the effects of the sudden transition from her warm bed to the cold chilly stream. Without loss of time she was conveyed back to her chamber, where she now lies, in the most dangerous state.”

“What has become of the wretched father?” asked Edward. “He lives,” replied Henry, and is able to get about; but he has become so violent in his grief, that Mr. Blair has ordered

his servants not to permit him to enter the sick room of his child."

"And your brother!" added Edward, almost frightened at the sound of his own voice.

"O, he is wretched indeed!" answered Henry, "yet, to all appearance, he has armed himself with resignation against the worst that may happen still there is something so grievous in his whole manner, that it shocks and alarms me when I think of it."

"It is a sad tale," murmured Edward.

"You are not surprised, then, at my want of spirits."

"Most truly not," again murmured Edward.

"Ought not this," continued Henry, "to be looked upon as a lesson sent, not only to teach us to moderate our view of happiness, but also to fortify our minds against trouble, that when, if perchance it must come, we may be the better enabled to meet it, and counteract its influence?"

“Doubtless it ought,” replied Edward, “yet Henry,” added he, his thought recurring to himself, “it is a hard thing to bear the doubt; the fear arising from the uncertainty of the fate that may await us, when we are once truly excited with the full force of expectation.”

“I believe it,” said Henry, “and hence we are told to put our trust in Him who is able to deliver us—that is, either by granting our request, or by giving us sufficient strength to bear up against its disappointment. But, at present, I have no wish to proceed further with so serious an argument. For my own individual self, I have nothing to complain of, and, perhaps, I have intelligence that may render you somewhat happier.”

“After the dreadful tale you have recited,” replied Edward, “do not, in God’s name, trifle with me, nor teach me to trifle with my own feelings. Tell me, have you heard anything of Susan?”

“I have,” replied Henry, “and something which, I trust, you may turn to advantage. If my information prove correct, which I have no reason to doubt, she is staying with a friend of Mr. Layton’s.”

“Mrs. Hayling, of Fieldhill!” ejaculated his companion.”

“The same,” continued Henry, “but I see you have been before-hand with me. I thought I should have been the first to tell you.”

“You are,” said Edward; “I did not know she was there, though I confess I have often suspected it, and would have gone over to ascertain the fact, but that I feared it would only render my case more desperate. I must, however, soon resolve on some plan of action, for I feel my thoughts are becoming quite insupportable. I have often comforted myself into patient resignation, by thinking that Susan would write to me. I have fancied a thousand reasons why she

has not; but I cannot continue to do so. It is a false thing to make one's ignorance argue one into happiness. I must have proof—proof, alas! of what? I cannot doubt her constancy, and O God! if through an idle feeling, I run any risk of plunging her into such a gulph, as your brother and Mary now are in, what folly were mine!”

Henry, seeing how much his friend was likely to be excited by their discourse, endeavoured to alter its subject, in which attempt, on their way home, he in part succeeded. Before they parted for the night, Edward was made calmly to promise that he would not attempt to see Susan, without having first consulting his friend on the practicability of the plan.

CHAPTER X.

It has been stated, that when Susan arrived at Fieldhill she found everything prepared with the utmost attention to her comfort, and that even the morose Charles departed for a time, from his almost habitual silence in his welcome to his young guest—happy, happy had it been for her had his attention ended there; but, alas! each passing day soon gave evidence that he had, apparently, again become an altered man.

It appeared his whole study to please her, but he possessed many opportunities of doing so without its exercise. A thousand things which were likely to prove interesting to her, were as common as the day to him. Each woodland path was familiar to his very feet. He knew where, from beneath the gloom of lofty trees, a

single step displayed a wide extended scene of animated beauty. The silver streams which irrigate and fertilize the country, he had traced up to their source. Discoursing of their various windings, he could lead her to where the spring, pure and bright, burst, gurgling and glittering, from the bosom of the earth. In fact, there was not a spot that Susan could wish, or was likely to visit, that he had not passed over, again and again; but with what different sensations from those they were likely to awaken in the breast of Susan—the reader, if he would imagine, has only to remember the habits of his early life.

At the period of Susan's arrival, and for some weeks afterwards, the days were filled with one continual burst of sunshine, while bountiful nature clothed in her most pleasing, rich, and gorgeous attire, outdid even description's loveliness. Who can doubt that the soothing tranquillizing spirit of all this did not reach

her heart, or that, amidst such scenes, her young and ardent mind could sink into the lasting misery of despair. That she was perfectly happy I do not assert, for, doubtless, when anything more beautiful or pleasing than usual engaged her attention, her thoughts would recur more earnestly to Edward, and she would secretly wish that he was by her side. But even that wish, it may be fairly supposed, was not so continually uppermost in her mind as it would have been had she been quite alone.

Charles was her constant companion, and while she became insensibly pleased with his attention, she was, sometimes, not a little amused with his every-day remarks on the beauties around them. She saw that, from having gazed on them from infancy, his perceptions had become blunted, and that he could not have understood her, had she been able to give a tongue to the enthusiasm which ever and anon she felt burning in her bosom.

'This view of her companion, as far as it went, was favourable to Edward, as it served to make her more highly prize the nobler faculties of his mind, and to store up a number of things in her memory, to talk to him about at the first favourable opportunity. But, as no such opportunity did, or appeared likely to occur, she began to debate in her own mind the propriety of writing to him; and, not being able to perceive anything very improper in the action, she shortly afterwards commenced her letter. Yet, not wishing to be observed, she resolved to write it secretly in her bed-room, which, as she felt bound to write a very great deal, kept her letter about much longer than she had calculated upon; indeed, before she had half completed it, she looked upon it as an irksome task, and often threw it aside for a ramble through the fields.

Of Mr. Layton she still felt as she had done, with this addition, that her convictions became stronger and stronger every day—that she

should never be able to love him. Still she could not but be sensible of his attention and kindness, and her mother's selfish pride-begetting words; if she married him, it would place her on an equality with the wives of the first tradesmen of the town, would, sometimes, be remembered, despite her love for Edward. However, it never failed to call forth the better qualities of her heart, and she would conclude, and thereby strive to banish the selfish thought forever from her presence, "No, no! I can never do it. Poverty with Edward would be better than abundance with his master."

She had been a fortnight at Fieldhill, the period originally fixed upon for her return home, but which had been, afterwards, lengthened to a month, when she was agreeably surprised by a visit from her mother.

Of this visit I do not find further occasion to speak, than to state that the exchange of kind

words between the mother and daughter was mutual and affectionate. Susan had long since determined that she would not be the first to mention the unhappy difference which had arisen between them. Greatly, however, to her surprise, she discovered that her mother appeared, in a like manner, anxious to avoid the subject. It is true, she spoke both of Mr. Layton and Edward; but it was in her ordinary manner, without the slightest allusion to what had passed. Susan, therefore, from the entrance of her mother up to the moment of her departure, felt a gladness springing up in her bosom from the hope thus excited, that some unexpected happy cause had freed her for ever from further persecution on that most painful subject. But, at the moment when this hope was bursting into certainty, she was painfully undeceived by her mother's clasping her to her bosom, and exclaiming, "Be dutiful, O my child, and God will bless you."

Before Susan had sufficiently recovered her surprise to be able to make any answer to this sudden and unexpected attack, they were joined by Mrs. Hayling and Charles; whereupon her mother instantly resumed her former every day tone of speech, and Susan saw, with renewed surprise, that she was not expected to answer. After taking an affectionate leave of her daughter, mingled with many thanks and good-byes to her friends, Mrs. Thomson departed from Fieldhill. The little party watched her to a distance, and then returned to the house. When Susan, feeling flushed with excitement and ill-disposed for conversation, retired to her chamber, leaving Mrs. Hayling and her son together in the room, who having drawn their respective chairs near to the window, seated themselves, and almost involuntarily commenced a conversation respecting the prospects of their guest.

“Poor Susan;” began Mrs. Hayling, “I can-

not look upon her without pity. The idea of this strange marriage, I am sure, hangs heavily upon her mind; and every day adds to my conviction, that if it ever does take place, it will be productive of the greatest misery."

"Did you tell her mother so?" inquired Charles.

"No;" replied Mrs. Hayling, "it is not for me to go uninvited between the desires of a mother and her child, for I perceive Mrs. Thomson is quite as eager for the match as, I am sure, Susan is to escape from it."

"Mrs. Thomson is a thoughtful woman," observed Charles.

"That may be;" replied his mother, "and in a worldly point of view, she may be very sensible, as, doubtless, it is very natural for her to desire it should take place. Yet, I cannot help thinking, she would better consult a mother's duty, if she would pause, and consider how it

will look in its effects, as well as how it does look in prospect, lest her child, through her filial affection, should be led to mistake the shadow of happiness for the substance."

"I do not see how Susan can well do that in the present instance," said Charles, with seeming unconcern. "Her marriage with Mr. Layton must, in her situation, be positively advantageous. I admit she is as amiable in her mind as she is beautiful in her person; but we must remember, that she is only the daughter of a poor housekeeper, who of herself will probably never have more to bestow upon her than would, if depended on, reduce her, in a few months, to beggary."

"But the Almighty," said Mrs. Hayling, "has wisely ordained that this world's open show of prosperity should be widely different from that pure and silent feeling arising from a contented mind, no matter whether it be clothed

in princely splendour, or clad in the garb of the humblest peasant."

"You would then argue, that the good things of this world should be held as nought?" said Charles.

"Not so;" replied his mother, "but I would separate the real good from the seeming. I would have that peace of mind, which all may possess, rightly valued and considered of, ere it is bartered for that which, after all, is, perhaps, a mere shadow. For what is this world's wealth, even in its most extended sense? Will aught that it can purchase bear comparison even with the beggar's peace of mind that breathes of happiness for ever? No! The good things of this world bestow not such happiness; nor have they any stability even in that which they do. The merchant of this year, who revelling in riches, is surrounded with luxury, may, in a few short months, be plunged

into the very depths of poverty, where even the common necessities of life are hungered for in vain. The humbler farmer, too, now rejoicing in plenty, may, in like manner, and in as short a time, be reduced for the means of living, to beg to be allowed to labour, even on the farm which he now proudly calls his own. No, no, Charles," continued his mother, in an impressive tone, "if we would be really happy, we must act in such an upright manner, that the consciousness may live within our hearts that we are possessed of that wealth which this world has neither the power to bestow or to take away."

"I know mother," said her son, "that we can never agree in our estimation of such things, although I am ever ready to confess that you, having had most experience, must best understand the matter. Yet, if I cannot think as you do, is it wise for us to argue ourselves into anger about it. It appears far better that I

should patiently await the teaching of years. But to return to Susan. Tell me, does Mr. Layton still continue as anxious as ever for the marriage? I suppose Mrs. Thomson thought Susan could be here without my once suspecting what was going on. She was as silent on the subject, as if I had been her master's real Simon-pure of a lover."

"That seems strange!" remarked Mrs. Hayling, "but, perhaps, she was not aware that you knew anything about it. To me she was anything but silent, repeating, over and over again, how very anxious Mr. Layton had become about it; and that each succeeding day appeared only to add to his impatience."

"And what says his noble apprentice to all this?"

"Oh, he, Mrs. Thomson says, she has reason to believe, is not acquainted with the person of his rival, although she is in continual fear

that he will, by some means or other, discover it."

"And why should she fear it?" inquired Charles.

"Edward is a young man of spirit," replied Mrs. Hayling, "and would not fail to be very earnest in the matter with his master, which might, perhaps, lead to his leaving the house, and provoke him to use unfair means to obtain possession of the person of her daughter, ere her affections have been sufficiently weaned from him."

"That would be a disappointment, doubtless;" said Charles, "but I think, while Susan is here, her mother need give herself no further trouble about it. You know the old gentleman has constituted me her guardian; and, if he is to be warned of danger, I would advise him to look about him, for perhaps he may yet find a greater rival in another place than he has at home."

Mrs. Hayling looked at her son with a degree of fear and curiosity not easily to be described. The errors of his youth were still fresh in her memory; and although of late he had acted openly—in the most sensible and sober manner, she had often had occasion to observe, that when speaking of serious subject, he either did wilfully pervert the sentiments of his own heart, or that—dreadful fear, there was still a void there—a sad deficiency of every noble and disinterested thought.

Charles observing his mother's anxiety, burst into a fit of laughter, crying out at the same time, "I thought I should surprise you. Now I do think, mother, if you would speak a good word for me, I might manage to end the dispute of these good sensible town's-people, much as the monkey did, in the fable, with the two cats and the cheese."

"I am glad to see you are jesting," said Mrs.

Hayling, yet, making it appear, by her manner, that she almost feared he was not.

“It is my only resort from your too serious view of the subject,” added Charles. “If she were possessed of a few thousands, then indeed I might need your assistance; as it is, why she may e’en marry Mr. Layton if she pleases, as I believe it would be much better for her than to have his poor apprentice.”

“You do not think her heart is much interested in the matter then!”

“A girl’s heart,” said Charles, rising from his seat and taking up his hat, “is much beyond my comprehension, if love and poverty are dearer to it than the fine things of the world. But you know I am no favourable judge of their motives or actions.”

“It was not always so,” said his mother.

“It was not,” said Charles bitterly, as he left the room, “but you know I have learned better now.”

Alas! thought Mrs. Hayling, I am miserable even in my happiness. When he left his wild companions, and again became a member of our fire-side, I blessed God for the change, and thought that all my troubles were ended. Yet this seeming hardness of heart frightens me, lest the change should not have been complete. But I will not repine, but rather believe that his present manners are assumed, and that he did not feel less worthily, although he spoke with the careless wilfulness of youth. As she was thus musing, Susan came into the room, upon which, making some idle excuse about the weather, she began bustling about, to hide from the keen eyes of her youthful guest the tumult of her bosom.

Susan, after having in the silent loneliness of her room struggled to get the mastery of her feelings, had in part succeeded, and now returned to her friend with a proposal for an

evening's walk. This being readily accepted by Mrs. Hayling, they sallied out together into the fields, where they were soon joined by Charles, when, if any little unpleasantness had existed between them during the day, it was now buried in forgetfulness beneath their intercourse of good feeling and attention to each other.

During the next week, Mr. Layton paid them a visit; but as he did not seek a private interview with Susan, nothing particular occurred towards the progress of my story. As a matter of course, he was very kind to her, and desirous that she should command every comfort and attention during his absence. Susan could but feel flattered with all this, and however much she might dislike the cause that gave rise to it, she was possessed of too much good natural feeling to show any dislike to him at such a time.

“Should he seek my ear privately,” thought she, “then indeed I will open my whole heart to him, and trust all to his generosity.” But neither did he then, or her mother, at a subsequent visit, in any such way mention the subject which she had reason to believe was uppermost in their thoughts.

For this consideration she was indebted to the kindness of Mrs. Hayling, who had secretly made it a condition with her mother and Mr. Layton, that while she remained there, and did not show an eagerness to get back to Marshend, or to correspond with Edward, she should not be urged to commit herself with Mr. Layton before a sufficient space of time had elapsed to allow her to coolly consider and determine on the line of conduct her unbiassed mind would lead her to pursue. As Susan knew nothing of this, the continued silence of her mother and Mr. Layton filled her with the utmost surprise;

but in no wise made her unhappy, as it encouraged, rather than otherwise, her mind to dwell upon her future prospects with Edward, which, up to this time, she felt as earnest about as on the day she left her home.

She had been at Fieldhill near upon a month, still her letter to Edward remained unfinished. The forbearance of her mother had, in a great manner, disarmed her of her resolution to write. The thought would arise in her mind : if she does not seek to take an unfair advantage of me, why should I of her? There would be plenty of time to write when she knew what was intended towards her. Mr. Layton might, perhaps, after all, think better of his foolish proposal. Why, then, should she make herself ridiculous by writing about it? Thus, from day to day, the letter was put off, until she began to look upon herself as fortunate for not having written what would have filled Edward with

groundless apprehension, and made herself appear very vain and foolish.

That there was the slightest probability of her letter never reaching Edward, even if she did send it, she never for a moment suspected. Whether there was or was not, the reader, after reading a few pages more, will perhaps be better able to form an opinion.

In the fifth week of her abode at Fieldhill, on a beautiful day, in the month of September, when the country is gloriously rich in the full promise of peace and plenty for the approaching winter, she had been with Charles to a market-town, a few miles distant in a contrary direction to Marshend. During their ride she had been so much pleased with the kind attention of her companion that, almost without her being aware of it, he had become a confident in her thoughts. She had been led to speak of Marshend, and of associations there-

with connected, which were still likely to have an influence on her mind; and he, with a tone of feeling, far different from that assumed by idle curiosity, appeared really interested in her welfare, and, by his manner more than by his words, showed that he felt himself flattered by her confidence. This, of course, tended but the more to improve his position in her good opinion, and cause her with less reserve to give utterance to her thoughts. Thus Charles, finding all things conspiring to his wishes, just before they reached home, ventured to make the offer of his friendship and advice, should she ever have occasion to employ either.

Susan replied, with many thanks, concluding with a promise, that she certainly would not forget his kindness.

Mrs. Hayling had never thoroughly gained the confidence of Susan, although she had ever treated her with the utmost kindness. There

was always such a tone of seriousness about her conversation that made it appear to her youthful companion tame and uninteresting—nay, at times, I believe almost irksome. She was too light of heart to imbibe instruction in so grave a manner, while a person far less worthy than Mrs. Hayling might have gained an ascendancy over her, by entering a little more into the tendency and sanguine temperament of her mind.

But, perhaps, this was not the only reason. There might be on Susan's part a little doubt with respect to the part Mrs. Hayling was playing in her own little history. How knew she but she might be in frequent correspondence with her mother; and, if so, would not the most trivial circumstance she could mention to her be conveyed to Marshend; and, if occasion offered, taken advantage of by Mr. Layton. But if, after all, the cause is doubtful, it is no

less certain that she did not feel inclined to trust Mrs. Hayling, which, unhappily, made her the more readily fall into the snares of the designing and unprincipled Charles.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. Layton becoming impatient to make open proposals to Susan, whereby to discover what effect his late kindness had produced upon her mind; and at the same time, not being able to understand that there was anything to be gained by the cautious policy adopted by his housekeeper and Mrs. Hayling, secretly determined, that, should they refuse to prepare her for his reception, he would go over alone in a day or two, and trust all to the energy of his own tongue. Mrs. Thompson, from a few unguarded words which he let fall, was led to suppose that some such scheme had taken possession of his mind, and being as eager for the match as he was; after having again thought it over in the silence of the night, arose betimes

the next morning, and going to her master, proposed that she should go over that very day and talk to Susan about it. This, being exactly in accordance with his desire, met with his most unqualified approbation.

On arriving at Fieldhill, Mrs. Thompson was received at the farm, by its inmates, with all the outward marks of affection and regard, but she was there too intent on business to let much time escape in compliments; in a few minutes afterwards, after managing to be left alone with Mrs. Hayling, she commenced a conversation respecting the project that filled her whole soul. Being listened to with patience, she progressed so well, that with some difficulty and many words, she in a manner squeezed from her hostess her consent to be allowed to overstep the bounds of their agreement, that she might induce Susan, without further delay, to close with the advantageous offer of Mr. Layton.

“ And so you enjoy the country very much ? ” said Mrs. Thomson, to her daughter, after the above conference was over, at the same time taking her arm as if desirous for a walk.

“ I am more delighted with it than I can possibly tell you,” replied Susan, accepting her mother’s invitation, “ dull as I once thought the country would be to live in, I now find a charm in everything around me, from the merest wild flowers that lie scattered over the fields, to the grand and extensive prospects which ever and anon, as we reach different elevations, are ready to burst upon the sight, and fill the mind with wonder and delight.”

“ It gives me great pleasure,” observed her mother, “ to see you so happy ; can you not show some of these views to me ? ”

“ Oh yes, but— ”

“ But what ? ” asked her mother with surprise.

“ Oh, nothing,” replied Susan, “ only just at

the moment, I remembered I had promised Charles to go a little journey with him to-day."

Just as Susan finished the sentence, Charles came up with them, saying, he was quite ready to set off, but that as Mrs. Thompson was come, he supposed he should not have the pleasure of Susan's company.

Mrs. Thompson replied smilingly, "she thought it would be scarcely fair, considering that she had but so short a time to stop, to deprive her even for a few minutes of her *pet's* company, when he could have such frequent opportunities of being with her on the morrow, the next day, and so on."

After a little more parleying of the same kind, Charles proceeded on his journey alone, and Susan and her mother continued their walk.

"I don't know how it is," observed Mrs. Thomson to her daughter, "but you never seem anxious to learn anything about your home.

Every time I have been to see you, I have come prepared to answer a thousand questions about your old friends, and yet have returned without having once mentioned their names."

And I have been anxious to learn a thousand things, thought Susan, but she only replied, "she should be very glad to hear it all now, and make up by her patient attention, for her past neglect."

"I do not charge you with a fault," said her mother, "and indeed, since you are so happy here, and there is little or nothing doing at Marshend to interest you, I can be hardly surprised at your silence."

"My dear mother—" began Susan, willing at once to come to an explanation, now that so favourable an opportunity presented itself, "My dear mother, previous to my leaving Marshend, I told you that my determination was unalterably taken,"—but suddenly check-

ing herself, as if she thought she was saying more than the occasion warranted, she continued in a playful manner, "and yet the place of my birth is very dear to me."

"I remember very well," said Mrs. Thompson, answering the first part of her sentence, "that you did tell me so, and also, that you would be very miserable if sent away from it."

"And, indeed mother, I have been so," replied Susan.

"How?" inquired her mother, "did you not tell me you were very happy here?"

"No, not happy, mother, but that the country was more interesting than I expected to have found it."

"You said you were more delighted than I could imagine," added her mother.

"I do not deny it," replied Susan; "but, mother, can you not suppose that even that may have, in part, arisen from my mind being

less subjected to the influence of a painful argument."

"I should rather suppose, that the kindness of Mrs. Hayling and her son had done it," observed her mother.

"I confess," said Susan, meekly, "that since I have become thoroughly acquainted with my kind friends here, I have had less reason to regret the happiness of home."

"You are sensible then," observed her mother, "of the debt of gratitude you owe to him, whose considerate kindness placed you with such friends?"

"You speak of Mr. Layton," said Susan, "one for whom I have ever felt the most unbounded respect—but my dear mother," she continued in a tone of heartfelt earnestness, "I have thought of him too much as a father, ever to allow any other sentiment to usurp its place ; I would sacrifice much to please you, but, oh ! do

not make me miserable by desiring too much!"

This appeal, simple and earnest as it was, touched her mother's heart, and for a moment, made her almost waver in her purpose. Happy had it been for her, had she done that to which the impulse of her heart first prompted her; but, alas! the calculating mother prevailed, and all softer emotions were banished from her mind, while she replied, "it is in the very nature of youthful impulse to run into these extravagant idle thoughts. When one gets a few years older, the mistakes and follies of youth are seen in their naked characters, without the gloss that passion throws over them."

"I am not able to dispute with you," said Susan, "and, therefore, am most anxious to avoid the attempt."

"I am very happy to hear it," replied Mrs. Thomson; "it is the duty of an affectionate child, to listen with attention to a mother's

counsel—a mother too, who has ever been sincerely attached to you, and who has cherished, and still lives to cherish, nothing on earth so tenderly as your happiness and welfare.”

“ Need I, my dear mother,” said Susan, “ repeat how deeply sensible I am of the many obligations I am under to you; or how very willing I am to listen to your counsel, or to obey your instructions, save in that one thing, in which I feel, were I to do as you desire, I should thereby only add to your present unhappiness, and much endanger my own eternal peace? Oh! my mother, why should you wish such a thing of me, when I tell you, I am persuaded it would render me wretched for ever?”

“ Did I think so,” replied her mother, with a resolution to resist being in any manner led from her purpose, “ I would be silent, but I know to the contrary, and, therefore, feel it my duty to speak; I hoped, and I trusted not with-

out reason, that your being here in quiet, and having had time to coolly consider your circumstances, your own good sense would have clearly pointed out to you the path of duty, I could not think you would still persevere in this foolish passion for a boy." The mention of him, and the thought that her daughter could be guilty of such an act of folly, as still to refuse the master with a fortune already made, to the man, or rather the boy, as she called him, who, perhaps, might never live to make one, proved too much for her good nature, and, forgetting her previous profession of living for her daughter, she concluded by saying, "But, if you are determined to pursue your self-willed course, you must think hereafter of providing for yourself, for I am getting too old to be depended on, and it would be both ungenerous and unjust in you, to continue here any longer, feeding on the bounty of a man that you cannot even speak respectfully of."

“ You mistake me,” said Susan, in her turn, displaying more spirit than she had previously done, “ not only do I wish to speak of Mr. Layton with respect, but with the utmost veneration and gratitude.”

“ You have a strange way of doing it !” added her mother ; “ but do as you please, if my happiness is so little worth your attention, I again repeat it, do as you please. If I had possessed your heart, as I hoped I did, it would not have ended thus.”

This was said in a manner totally different from the preceding ; and Susan seeing the tears gathering in her mother’s eyes, felt nothing but that she was unhappy, and, obeying the impulse of the moment, threw her arms about her neck, and begged her to tell her what she desired, and she would, if possible, conform to her wish.

Thus the effects arising from the angry feelings of Mrs. Thomson’s defeated purpose gained

more for her than all her previous argument; for it need scarce be remarked to the reader, that her grief arose more from a vexatious selfish disappointment than from any worthier cause.

She was, however, too much in earnest to accomplish her purpose, and too little scrupulous as to the means employed, to hesitate for one moment about taking advantage of her daughter's excited feelings; flattering herself, that if she followed up her present vantage, her object would be soon attained. The sourness of her heart became suddenly sweet, and her mind filled with gentleness and affection; to prove which, she began by saying that Susan must be well aware that she would not thus have urged her, had she not felt convinced it was all for her good.

Susan could only answer, that she was perfectly satisfied of her mother's intention; and

although she still felt an unconquerable objection to receive Mr. Layton as a suitor, on that account she was willing thus far to comply; at the same time, resolving in her own mind, to be very plain and candid with the old gentleman. But of this, Mrs. Thomson knew nothing, and, therefore, her thoughts continued unruffled. Happily for her daughter's present peace, the intelligence she had to convey to Mr. Layton made her very anxious to set out for home, which, in a short time afterwards, she accordingly did, nodding and smiling, and looking as happy as if she had really cause to be so.

As soon as she was gone, Mrs. Hayling having been previously informed that Susan had consented to see Mr. Layton, thought it not an unfit opportunity to read her a lesson on a married life, not doubting, for a moment, but she would soon become a wife. Now this, of all things in the world, was what Susan could least bear to

listen to; being, at the time, as fully resolved as ever, never to become the wife of Mr. Layton, in spite of her mother's sanguine expectations to the contrary.

Mrs. Hayling had just commenced her exposition, when Charles, who had a few minutes before returned from his journey, came into the room, and by his presence cut short the thread of her discourse; and further, to her annoyance, after a few remarks on the fineness of the day, he invited Susan to take a walk, which she, happy by any means to escape from Mrs. Hayling's threatened lecture, eagerly consented to.

Charles saw that something unpleasant had occurred, and, as soon as they were alone, begged to know if he might be made acquainted with the particulars. Susan would have passed it off as a trifle not worth talking about, but he, attending rather to her manner than her words, insisted that it must be something more

than a trifle that could have excited her so much.

From the confidence which Susan already had in her companion, it needed, in the present state of things, but a little insinuating pity and flattery to complete his conquest over her mind; and this, being applied with all the art he could command, which, unfortunately, was not a little, she was brought to make him her confident in her most secret thoughts.

“I do not see that your case is so very desperate,” said Charles, after having complacently listened to all that his companion had to say. “Your mother, doubtless, thinks she is doing all for the best, with respect to your present and future welfare; and, Mr. Layton will, with her assistance, doubtless, do the best he can towards making himself happy; it, therefore, plainly becomes your interest to do the best you can to protect yourself from the

effects of the over-kindness of the one, and the over-selfishness of the other."

"Ah! but in what manner can I do it?" inquired Susan.

"By secretly, and quickly, marrying Edward," added Charles.

This was spoken in a tone of firmness, and caused Susan to spring almost from his side with delight. It exactly agreed with what she had often thought would be the best means, should she be pressed too closely, of freeing herself at once and for ever from their importunities. But, when her eyes met his, there was nothing in them to encourage the spirit that his words had called to life. She only saw that they were fixed upon her with a keenness that threatened to penetrate her very soul.

Charles, observing her confusion, continued, "I see you have thought of this before; nor am I surprised at it: but, you should remem-

ber, that, although such a marriage would effectually protect you against your mother's and Mr. Layton's desires, it does not follow that it would be attended with the blessing you fondly anticipate from it."

"And why not?" asked Susan, very innocently.

"I have no particular reason to give," replied Charles; "but, you are young, and Edward is young, and it has been remarked that the love of childhood and youth seldom fit a couple for the every-day troubles and vexations of life."

"My mother has told me so a thousand times," said Susan, despondingly.

"As for your mother," observed Charles, "in talking over this, it will be, perhaps, best not to mention her; for, doubtless, as she desires you to marry Mr. Layton, she is fully satisfied that you could not be happy if you were to marry one nearer your own age."

“But, you,” said Susan, “you who have no such desire to accomplish ; why should you talk in the same manner?”

“Simply, because I believe there is a great deal of truth in the assertion,” replied Charles, “from the fact that our affections and desires are continually undergoing a change.”

“Is it possible !” said Susan, “can you imagine that I shall ever think differently to what I do now?”

“Certainly !” said Charles. “Nay, you would do so even now, were you in other circumstances than what you are.”

“You frighten me,” said Susan ; “but I hope you cannot prove that we are placed in a world where our firmest resolves are as likely to be founded in foolishness and error as in truth and justice.”

“I should be sorry to frighten you,” observed Charles ; and then, after a few moment’s

silence, he added, "we are growing too serious. Therefore, if you please, we will talk of something else."

"But," said Susan, "I have not yet obtained your advice as to how I ought to act."

"I have placed myself in a very awkward situation," replied Charles; "when I offered to give you my advice, I did not think it would prove half so serious an undertaking as I now find it. It is certainly a very serious thing to give advice," he continued, half audibly, at the same time inwardly rejoicing that he was called upon to do it.

"It is, however," observed Susan, "what a friend is bound to do, and no more than you have promised."

"Well! if I must give an opinion," replied Charles, "I should say, that, for the present, it would be well to let things take their natural course. You have promised to see Mr. Layton,

and you cannot now recall your words without appearing very fickle-minded, or very seriously offending him."

"But, I must offend him if I do see him," observed Susan, willing to hear what further argument her friend could advance, to urge her to her disagreeable duty.

"That, of course, you will do as you please about," answered Charles.

"Will it not offend him," asked Susan, "if I tell him the reason I cannot listen to him?"

"Doubtless!" said Charles; "but I do not see why you need, at present, tell him any such thing. Be sure he will be content and happy with a very little show of kindness, that will encourage him to look with hope to the future."

"But, that little encouragement," argued Susan; "how can I give it, when I feel so decidedly impelled to the contrary course?"

"There are many reasons," said Charles,

“ why you should endeavour to overcome that great repugnance which renders you unable to bear his presence.”

“ You mistake me,” said Susan; “ I have no repugnance to his company; in truth, I believe I am fond of it: but, then, it is accompanied with a feeling which, I think, I should have experienced for my father, had he lived to appear to me as Mr. Layton has ever done.”

“ Old children, as well as young ones, must be humoured in their whims,” observed Charles.

“ He has been very kind to me,” continued Susan, “ and I feel I should not be acting right, if I were to encourage him to make himself still more ridiculous about me than he has already done.”

“ You mistake,” said Charles, “ and are too scrupulous. You forget, that, if he is acting a ridiculous part, it is not you that have made him do it—although you may have been the unhappy cause.”

“But, if I were to encourage him in it, would it not then be different?” asked Susan.

“Certainly!” replied Charles; “but, as it would be his own foolish selfishness that would compel you to do so, he would still be the author of his own disappointment. But, granted, that it is not quite right, and, consequently, that you reject it; consider what will be the consequence, if you return him a decided answer.—You will offend him, and grieve your mother; and, either be cast off by them altogether, or sent to a greater distance from Marshend—as they will consider Edward at the bottom of all your obstinacy, as they will be pleased to call it. I will not say,” continued he, musingly, “that I should advise you as I have done, could I see a possibility of your obtaining your wishes by any other means. As I cannot, I do most earnestly beg you to see him; and, if needs must be, rather to encourage his foolish passion than otherwise.”

“That I will not promise to do,” said Susan.

“It would make him feel the more secure in obtaining his object, and, consequently, less attentive in watching you.”

“But, I should hate myself for having practised such deception,” added Susan; “and, therefore, will not attempt any such thing—at least, for the present.”

“I have merely given you my opinion,” observed Charles, “of what I consider you ought to do in the present state of your fortune; and I have given it as a humble friend who has your interest most sincerely at heart, but, who would not wish you to adopt more of his advice than you think would tend to your own advantage.”

“I am grateful—very grateful, for your kindness,” said Susan; “and I trust I shall be able to act in a manner to warrant its continuance.”

Having thus given and received mutual pro-

fessions of friendship and esteem for each other, they concluded their walk, and with it—their conversation.

It was yet early in the evening, but Mrs. Hayling, having had a busy day with her household duties, and intending to be up betimes the following morning, was glad to get to rest. Susan, although she did not feel inclined for sleep, felt an equally strong desire to be alone, that she might indulge her thoughts unobstructed and unobserved.

Pleased, therefore, with the opportunity that thus offered itself, she immediately retired to her room, and seating herself by the little window, that commanded an extensive and beautiful view of the surrounding country, now smiling beneath the full orb of night, gave herself up, unreservedly, to a sort of musing meditation.

And here I cannot help observing, although

such observations may have been repeatedly made, that a young female, situated as Susan then was, is one of the most interesting, and, at the same time, pitiable object, in the whole world. Full of the animation of youth—in feature and form, wanting little of a perfect beauty—possessing an easy and unsuspecting mind, not confident in its own resources, yet sanguine of its desires. There sat Susan, as many have sat before her, gazing listlessly on the bright full-moon, amidst disappointment and vexation—dreaming of happiness yet to come; while, alas! she stood, as it were, upon the brink of a gulph of unfathomable and eternal destruction.

From her infancy she had been brought up in the knowledge and reverence of the one true God—she had been taught to look humbly up to Him as to a kind and indulgent Father, who would not forsake her while she continued to

observe his commandments ; and, in all simplicity of thought and action, walk virtuously, according to his will. Never having had occasion to doubt the truth of this doctrine, she had thus far passed on, ever ready to declare for its purity and due observance. But, doubts, dark and many, began now to crowd upon her mind ; every day appeared to be scattering contradictions in her path ; while those persons whom she had been led to suppose possessed the power to solve them, only added to their perplexity in the attempt. To whom, or to what, therefore, could she now turn for real comfort or consolation ? Mr. Layton, her father and her friend—could she appeal to him ? Did not his desire to usurp the place of her innocent heart's first choice, prove, beyond doubting prove, that he was not actuated by that religion she had so often heard him speak with reverence of ? And, yet, she had always thought him serious in his

profession. Could he possibly think it all a cheat? Was it a mere matter of form for old people to keep the unruly thoughts and actions of the young within reasonable bounds? Alas! what questions were these to have birth in the the mind of a young and inexperienced female!

And then, her mother, even her mother—she, who had been at the pains to instil all her early notions of justice and heaven into her mind—she, who had taught her that a conscience void of reproach is productive of the greatest blessing the mortal state is susceptible of! Did her present actions agree with her former precepts? Was she not now foremost in the desire for her to sully, not only its purity in thought, but, by an action of selfishness; which, if she believed in her own precepts, she must feel assured would be sufficient to chequer with misery the whole of her future life? Could she believe, and feel assured of this? It seemed not possible.

And then, passing over Mrs. Hayling, who was too severe even to gain a hearing, there was Charles, her new-made and disinterested friend. He had not scrupled to speak, and almost plainly declare, that religion and its observances were mere shadows, beneath which, the old and the cunning found a shelter to hide their impositions and indolence from their more enterprising and youthful associates: he had not feared even to advise her to enter in the path of dissimulation and deception. If he thought it wrong, what possible advantage could he wish, or expect to derive, in striving to lead her astray? His advice, at least, must be quite disinterested. But, then, he might be in error, so might her mother, so might Mr. Layton: but, then, again, was it for her—inexperienced and young as she was—to condemn them of error, who were ever ready to boast of their knowledge?

These were perplexing and unsatisfactory thoughts, from which she gladly turned, to refresh her mind in the sun-shine of past happiness. As she gazed upon the mystic and silvery moon, she thought of the many pleasant walks she had had with Edward; and how, in the innocent gaiety of her heart, she had enjoyed the present time without one perplexing thought about good or evil—the world's Almighty great Creator, or the condemned spirits that languish beneath his frown.

Passing from this, she began to accuse herself of inattention to Edward, and to wonder how he would advise her to act were he present. She was now well assured that her mother had never, for one moment, given up the hateful project for her marriage; and, accordingly, all her scruples about corresponding with him were entirely removed. Why, then, had she not written to him on the instant she discovered

it? It was very wrong, and very neglectful and unkind.

Preparing, therefore, for her task, she sat down and completed her letter, and then retired to rest, determined to send it to him the next morning as early as possible.

On the following day a letter was received by Mrs. Hayling, from Mrs. Thomson, to inform her that Mr. Layton would not be able to pay them his intended visit, as a fall from his horse, which he had had the day before, though not considered dangerous, was yet sufficiently severe to oblige him to keep at home for a few days. This proved an actual relief to Susan, for her last night's meditation had almost made her waver in her resolution to see him, or, at least, for any other purpose than to put an immediate end to his pursuit. Having, therefore, through the assistance of Charles, forwarded her letter to Edward, she began to hope,

and, apparently, not without reason, that he might come and see her, as she had desired him, before she was called upon for her dreaded interview with Mr. Layton. But, Charles, her disinterested and kind friend, had taken effectual means to prevent any such happy consummation of her wishes, by forwarding the letter—not to Edward, as directed, but to the destructive fire. He would have sent it to Mr. Layton, of course with strict injunctions for secrecy, had it not struck him that the natural yearning of her heart, which she had there, without restraint, given scope to, might produce an effect on Mr. Layton's mind very different from what he could desire—in fact, there appeared a possibility that the old gentleman might repent of his folly, and forthwith resign Susan to Edward, with his protection and favour: this, for certain reasons of his own, was a state of things he had not the remotest wish to bring about.

The illness of Mr. Layton, however, answered his purpose quite as well, or better, than his visit could have done; as it allowed him time to work upon the sensitive and sanguine mind of Susan, with all the insinuating arts of an unprincipled man. Can it be a matter of surprise then with the reader, to learn that Susan began to look up to him for advice on every little occasion that perplexed her—that she should begin to feel attached to his company?

The silence of Edward, too, did not make her feel less sensibly her companion's kindness. She never doubted for a moment but Edward had received her letter; and, as he did not come, or answer it, she at first feared he was offended with her; but, as she felt satisfied she had intended no such offence, her pride came to her assistance, and soothed her disappointment.

Meantime, Charles strove to tell her, by indirect means, that her lover could care but little for her, and to throw out hints that he might, perhaps, have been consoling himself in her absence, with the attention of one of her female friends. This was what Susan could, by no means, bring herself to think; though she could not disguise from herself that it was possible.

CHAPTER XII.

IT so happened the second day after the last conversation recorded as having passed between Edward and his friend Henry, that the latter was sent by his master on business to within a short distance of Fieldhill. As he was slightly acquainted with Mrs. Hayling, he determined to embrace the opportunity, thus unexpectedly offered, of calling upon her; and, without seeming to be interested in the fate of Susan, endeavour to see her; and, if possible, learn the state of her feelings towards Edward.

Yet, he did not, previous to his going, think it proper to inform his friend of his intention, lest he should thereby excite expectations which the merest accident might deprive him of the power to gratify.

After having satisfactorily arranged his master's business, he left his horse at a road-side public-house, about a mile from Fieldhill, and then proceeded on foot across some fields on his errand of discovery. Mrs. Hayling, received him with the utmost cordiality, and on learning that he had been from home since the morning, invited him to sit down and partake of the homely fare her house afforded. So far all was well; but, he had not yet accomplished the object of his visit. Fearing to make any direct inquiry, he was obliged to content himself with a few observations that had a tendency to draw Mrs. Hayling into a conversation respecting her guest; but, she, either not understanding him, or purposely avoiding the subject, replied in so general a manner that he could not learn anything from her, and yet had not occasion to complain of being treated uncivilly.

At length, during a pause in their conversation, footsteps were heard in the passage; and, on Henry turning eagerly to the door, he saw the object of his solicitude enter, accompanied by Charles.

Susan was overjoyed to see him; she knew that he and Edward were very intimate, and, therefore, did not doubt but he could tell her much of which she was most anxious to learn. On hearing that he was immediately about to leave them, she proposed to accompany him a little way on his return. This was what he very much desired; and, therefore, without allowing her time to change her mind, expressed his pleasure at the proposal, and bidding Mrs. Hayling and Charles "Good night," took his departure.

"You will come with us, Charles?" said Susan, turning to him.

"No!" replied Charles, somewhat doggedly, "I am sorry I cannot!"

"Well! I will only just go across the next field," continued Susan; and then, turning to Mrs. Hayling, she added, playfully, "I shall soon be back; you need not fear that I shall run away."

"No!" muttered Charles, "I will take care of that:" and, turning away, he went off in a different direction, apparently not observing them.

"You have made a long stay at Fieldhill?" said Henry to Susan, as he took her arm and placed it within his own.

"Yes!" replied Susan, "and I have been here much longer than I expected."

"It has caused you to be much missed at Marshend;" observed Henry.

"Did he tell you I was here?" asked Susan, in a somewhat tremulous voice.

“He did!” replied Henry.

“And why did he not come himself?”

“You would have been little interested at seeing him, I think.”

“And why should you think so?”

“I had no reason to suppose you could be very anxious to see my brother,” replied Henry.

“Your brother!” echoed Susan, “Did you hear I was here only from your brother?”

“Who else,” asked Henry, “do you suppose I could hear it from?”

“I thought,” replied Susan, “that you were on very friendly terms with ——.” She had nearly added “Edward,” when what Charles had said to her about his inconstancy, shot across her mind, and pride prevented her from finishing the sentence. But, she had said enough to satisfy her companion that she alluded to him, and, consequently, that he was still dear to her. He, therefore, without a moment’s

hesitation, filled up the blank, by adding "Edward;" and then continued "Yes, Susan; I am! and, I trust, shall be so for a very long time to come."

"And is he quite well?" asked Susan, with as much unconcern as she could possibly throw into her voice and countenance.

"Yes, quite well!" replied Henry; "but very unhappy in your absence."

"If such were the case," said Susan, "he surely, ere this, would have taken an opportunity to see me. When did you see him last?"

"Yesterday!" replied Henry, "and he was then particularly lamenting the necessity he supposed you were under for not letting him hear from you."

"Not hear from me!" again echoed Susan, in a tone of surprise. "Has he not heard from me?"

"I have no reason to suppose he has," re-

plied Henry; "indeed, to be candid with you, Susan, I am afraid he feels that you have been guilty of unkindness towards him."

"Alas!" said Susan, "I am afraid he feels too truly; but you must be mistaken about the letter, for I really have written to him."

"I rejoice to hear it," observed Henry, "although I am persuaded he has never received any such letter: still, I repeat, I rejoice to hear it, as it assures me that you have not grown quite careless about him, as, I confess, I was almost afraid you might have done."

"You could have little reason for that," observed Susan; and, yet, from some cause or other, she found now that she had an opportunity to inquire everything about him: she felt a strange, unaccountable coolness steal over her mind, which seemed to deaden her desire for knowledge.

"I was afraid," continued Henry, "that the

temptation of wealth, to which I understood you were exposed, might prove too much for your disinterested love for Edward, but, I am glad, very glad, to observe to the contrary."

"And what do the town's-people say about it?" asked Susan. "Do they not think Mr. Layton is acting a very foolish part?"

"Mr. Layton!" repeated Henry, "I have not heard that he is particularly interested in the matter. You surely do not mean to say that he is become the rival, whom Edward has so much reason to fear and hate?"

"Can he be still ignorant of the fact?" said Susan.

"I am certain he is," replied Henry; "for, it was but the other day he was lamenting to me his master's misfortune in falling from his horse, and telling me how very kind and considerate he had become to him since you left home. It was but last week he mentioned your

name, and would, thereby, have entirely won Edward's confidence, had he not spoken harshly of you, and proposed to him, that, it was both his interest and duty to forget you; and, further, to do this effectually, it would be best for him to marry some one else—at the same time proposing to him, above all others, one of my sisters; and, in conclusion, saying, that, if he thought proper to follow his advice, he would do all sorts of good-natured things to set him forward in the world."

"And what said Edward to all this?" asked Susan; while all her former affection glowed for a moment in her bosom with its spring-tide freshness.

"That question I cannot answer," replied Henry, "with more certainty than what arises from my own conviction; for, indeed, I did not put it to him—feeling well assured what the answer must be: that, doing well—nay, that even life

itself, without your companionship, would be to him a dreary waste, not worth a single thought."

"You would flatter me," said Susan.

"Indeed, I would not;" replied Henry, in a tone of the utmost earnestness. "I would only act a friend's part, and tell you how much Edward's happiness depends on you."

Thus they continued to talk for some time, not going in a direct line from the house, but passing to and fro in the fields. The failure of the letter was, again and again, referred to; yet could they not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion respecting it. Susan could not, for a moment, doubt that Charles had acted dishonestly or carelessly with it, but she resolved to mention it to him, that he might discover where the fault lay.

Henry now began to think seriously of his return home; therefore, after a few more words, chiefly in the shape of promises to Susan, that

he would not forget to tell Edward all she had desired him, and to be very particular as to the spot at which she proposed to meet Edward on the following day, with the least possible chance of his being observed, he, with many kind "Adieu's," took his departure.

Susan had not parted many moments from her companion, before she was met by Charles, who, having disposed of the business which prevented his accompanying her, had kindly come to conduct her home—at least, so he said, and so Susan was willing to believe; yet, she could not help remarking, that he looked as if something very unpleasant had occurred since she last saw him; and she was not suffered to remain long in doubt as to its origin.

"I hope you have been well entertained by your young friend," began Charles.

"I have known him for a long time," said Susan, "and, of course, was very glad to see him."

"No doubt! and he had much to tell you: but, Susan, I must tell you, in my turn, that I fear you have not acted wisely."

"You surprise me, Charles! I hope I have not offended you!"

"No, no! Susan; I am not offended with you," said Charles, and he bit his lip. "No, no! Susan; I am not offended, Yet, as you have not unfrequently applied for my advice, it did but seem natural that you should have consulted me before you had entertained your young friend with so much seeming cordiality."

"I could not well do otherwise: you are aware I was surprised into the meeting, as also that he is the first person I have seen from Marshend since I left it, excepting my mother and Mr. Layton."

"But, I have yet to learn," said Charles, "that he would be a proper person to be made acquainted with your wishes. However, you

will do as you please; of course I have no business to interfere between you and your friends."

"I see you are offended," replied Susan; "and, if, as you say, I have acted unwisely, I am very sorry for it: but, if you will look kindly at the action, I hope you will be induced to alter your opinion of it. You know how very dear Marshend, and some persons there have long been to me."

"One person!" observed Charles, correcting her.

"I cannot deny it," replied Susan; "indeed, I have been very anxious about him, more particularly of late, on account of my letter remaining unanswered."

At the mention of this, there seemed to pass a smile of triumph over her companion's features; but it reached not his words, for he answered directly, without excitement or con-

fusion, which at once confirmed Susan in her opinion that he had sent it.

He said, she was very welcome to his poor assistance in any way in which she might consider it serviceable to her. At the same time, however, he could but express his regret and disappointment at seeing her so heedlessly act a part that, doubtless, would be attended with quite a contrary result from that which she so earnestly desired.

Again Susan expressed her sorrow that she should have offended him, and to prove that she had no intention of doing so, recited to him the greater part of the conversation which had just taken place between herself and Henry, not even concealing that part which related to the letter, or of the visit she expected from Edward.

The reader is entreated not to condemn Susan as guilty, at this particular time, of any great impropriety, in being thus explicit with her companion.

It has been before intimated that she had the most unbounded confidence in him, to which it is only necessary now too add that her caution in appointing a place from the house to meet Edward, was merely to avoid the observation of Mrs. Hayling.

Charles having listened to all she had to say, felt himself called upon to condemn her proceedings in the most unqualified manner. "If," said he, "this love-sick youth—(you must pardon me for calling him love-sick, as he really, by what you tell me, appears so.) I repeat, then, if this love-sick youth having met with the encouragement he has from you, should have no better sense than to come here now Mr. Layton is ill, what will be the consequence? Most certainly, however, he may strive with falsehood, to disguise the object of his absence, his master will discover the true cause; and what will be the result? Simply this: Mr. Layton will

be but the more earnest for your immediate answer to his proposal, and you will be obliged, without due consideration, to accept him or give him a final denial. Supposing, for a moment, that your answer is favorable, or rather as I see you seem to say, it is impossible it can be so—suppose, then, you are compelled to an immediate refusal; then will come the consequences that I have so often endeavoured to impress upon your mind—you will be left to yourself; and, being so left, will in spite and anger become the wife of Edward, when, in all probability, a few years will serve to metamorphose your loving swain into the surly and dissatisfied husband.”

“I do not fear that;” said Susan, striving to bear up against her companion’s “confusion worse confounded” counsel, “yet, admitting I now see that I have done wrong, it is too late to avoid the consequence.”

“But not too late to amend it,” observed Charles.

"How may it be done?" inquired Susan; "I cannot now send to tell him not to come until Mr. Layton recovers."

"No! that would be only putting off the evil, not curing it."

"What, then, would you have me do?"

"I," said Charles, "can have no reason to wish you to do or to act different from the prompting of your own judgment."

"I am satisfied," replied Susan, "that you have no interest in it but to serve me."

"You are very kind," said Charles, "to believe so much. You ask me, what I would have you do? I answer, that the best manner in which you can now act, at least, so it appears to my poor simple judgment, is, if possible, to avoid Edward when he comes; or, if you must see him, make your conversation with him as brief as possible. But, you had better think it over in your own mind; and, meantime, in all

things, and at all times, rest assured that I shall be ever ready to act the part of a stedfast friend."

It was by such conversations as this, that, strange as it may appear, Charles gained a complete ascendancy over the mind of his unsuspecting companion. He had a thorough contempt for Edward, and did not fail, on the slightest possible occasion, to present him to her mind in as ridiculous a shape as might be. Nor did he less boldly attack what he was pleased to call "the prejudice of her age;" namely, a love of truth and justice.

Alas! this did not pass like the idle wind through the trees around them, ruffling and agitating their foliage for a moment, and then leaving it to rest as quietly as before. No! the effect produced on her mind, corresponding with the cause, became an indelible impression. She could but be sensible, when meditating

alone in her chamber, that the world began to assume a deeper shade in her imagination ; she did not view it now as she had done a few weeks previously, and fancy it was overflowing with generosity and happiness ; although she had not quite arrived at the opposite opinion which proclaims it sunk in selfishness and corruption.

There were, however, doubts running riot in her mind, of a tendency that threatened the most fearful consequences. She was, as it were, in a vista, travelling at an accelerating pace from good to evil ; while, at the end from which she had started, stood her mother, urging her forward, yet, fondly imagining, that when she arrived at a certain point and had obtained the object of her chase, she would be able to stop and gaze around with composure, and then return with ease to her original position : or, in plainer language, after having arrived at the

altar of her God, under the banner of selfishness and deception, to take a first part in a sacred ceremony—to declare that true which her whole heart, in rebellion against her tongue, cried out “’Tis false!” After having offered all this violence to her God, her fellow-creature, and her own heart, having, at the same time become a wife, her mother fondly hoped that every doubtful, perplexing thought, would be hushed to rest, and that she would again resume her station amongst the most virtuous of her sex. Unhappy, misguided woman! she had yet to learn, from dreadful experience, that the first foot-print in the path of sin is, of all subsequent ones, the most easy to be avoided, and, yet, when once imprinted, the most difficult to be obliterated.

“Out of evil cometh good,” saith the proverb: but, alas! the misery of the object who has gone to evil is not the less real or acute,

though the picture thus offered to our view, by warning us of our danger, preserves many for a happier end.

On the day following that of Henry's visit to Fieldhill, Susan was awaiting, with a trembling excitement, the arrival of Edward. She had had sufficient spirit to reject an invitation which Charles had given her to accompany him on a visit to a friend, a few miles distant.

But, the complacency arising from this action was destined soon to give place to sensations which made her heartily wish she had accepted the invitation. The cause of her repentance arose from the appearance at Fieldhill, not of the expected Edward, but, his master. He having sufficiently recovered the injuries received from his fall, to be permitted to go out, had taken the earliest opportunity of riding over to accomplish the object of his long-threatened visit.

Susan, at seeing him, was overpowered with confusion and disappointment. It seemed, that even fate itself, had planned every thing against her. Filled with despondency, her spirit sank within her. A carelessness of self stole over her heart—she was taken by surprise, and saw no escape; and yet, must at once decide on action. To gain time was still the desired object; but Mr. Layton was by her side, and —.

The consequence of all this was, when he left her, he thought he had every reason to congratulate himself on the flattering reception he had met with; for, with wonder, he confessed to himself, that it was more flattering than even he had dared to hope. Nor was Mrs. Thomson a whit the less delighted when he returned home in the evening, and dilated, with self-satisfaction, on the prospect of his future happiness.

CHAPTER XIII.

Nothing could equal the astonishment of Edward when he learnt from Henry that it was his kind and generous master, Mr. Layton, who was at the bottom of all his disappointment and misery; and, situated as he was, it, for some time, rendered him almost desperate. Yet, it was a comfort! yes, a great comfort, to learn that the beloved object of his heart's choice still thought kindly of him—that she had thus far passed unscathed through the temptations intended to lure her from his side, and, as he justly thought, from the path of honesty and truth. His first impulse was, after listening to what Henry had to tell him, to go immediately to Mr. Layton, and upbraid him with his double-dealing; but, a moment's reflection served to

convince him of the impolicy of this course, and determined him to go on, if possible, as usual; so that neither he nor Mrs. Thomson might have reason to suppose that he was acquainted with their secret. Nor did he less resolutely resolve not to let the slightest chance slip by, that could, in any degree, throw any light on the disappearance of the letter—a loss which he looked upon as a treasure far superior to gold.

Having thus proposed and approved a mode of proceeding, his first and grand object was to get away, for a few hours, that he might once again, without loss of time, behold his beloved Susan. He flattered himself he should be able to go the very next day, according to Henry's appointment with her; but in this he was sorely disappointed, for, instead of his being sent out, as he expected, to transact some business for his master, Mr. Layton proposed going himself,

saying, he felt much better ; and, as the doctor advised his getting into the air as much as possible, he thought a ride would do him good.

Thus, then, for another day, Edward was obliged to delay his visit, while he had much reason to suspect, now that his eyes were opened, that Mr. Layton was gone to Fieldhill himself. But, he had sufficient command over his own feelings, to be able to hide the bitterness and anguish of his spirit from Mrs. Thomson.

The next morning, at breakfast time, while he yet lingered in the office, in a state of mind quite unfit for his sober duty, and yet unable to resolve on an excuse for wishing to absent himself from it, he was joined by Mr. Layton ; who, being much excited with his own pleasurable sensations, did not notice that Edward looked very much confused as he entered. After having made a few observations on some work, then in progress, he told Edward, that, not having felt

himself yesterday quite equal to the task he had undertaken, a portion of it remained unperformed, which he now wanted him to go and settle. Edward had the utmost difficulty to disguise the unbounded joy this intelligence gave him. With a throbbing heart he listened to his master's instructions; and, although the places he was desired to call at, were in a part of the country directly opposite to Fieldhill, it did not damp the ardour of his spirit, or for one moment persuade him that it was impossible that he could see Susan before another day.

That he might not raise any suspicion of his intention in the mind of his master, he contented himself with very little preparation; concluding, and not unjustly so, that, if Susan was as anxious to see him as he was to see her, the commonness of his dress would not, for a moment, disturb her thoughts; more particu-

larly, when he explained the reason. Being thus fully prepared, he was quickly on the road, convincing his horse (if horses are open to conviction,) that he was very anxious for him to put his best leg foremost, and get on as quickly as possible.

It was yet early morning, and he had a sufficient distance to go on his master's account, to require that his horse should stop to feed, and rest for an hour or two in the course of the day. He, therefore, proposed to himself, to get on with his business as fast as possible, and then ride to within a few miles of Fieldhill ; and, then, while his horse was baiting, to run over and see his beloved.

When Mr. Layton had left Susan the previous day, Charles needed not be told how worthily his pupil had obeyed his instructions. Susan, however, something to his vexation, retired to her room, and did not give him an opportunity

to speak to her for some time. She had felt, on Mr. Layton's taking his departure, stunned and confounded at the success of her own duplicity, whilst she scarce knew for what purpose it had been put in practice; save, only, that it was in accordance with the desire of her friend Charles. After thus allowing her thoughts to range at large for some time, little to her satisfaction, and finding they became less and less so every minute, she left her room to join Mrs. Hayling and Charles, whom she could hear were below; not so much, however, for any pleasure she expected to derive from their conversation, as to escape the bitter and tormenting reflections that were crowding upon her mind.

Charles, observing her restless manner as she entered the room, and, not doubting the cause, proposed, as the evening was very fine, to take a walk, and enjoy the fresh air. Mrs. Hayling

was against it; she told them that so much of the evening air, as they had been lately in the habit of taking, was very pernicious to health; and, therefore, they had better stay in, particularly Susan, as she wished to have some very serious talk with her.

Had the air been charged with the infectious plague, Susan would not have hesitated to plunge into it, so that she might escape, in her present state of mind, from the sermon-talk of her correct-meaning but ill-judging friend.

Charles saw her desire, and said, "No, no, mother! Susan will take no harm from a little walk, and I am sure she would like it."

"She had better not go," replied Mrs. Hayling, "the dew is falling."

"Oh! I do not mind the dew," said Susan, in as careless a manner as she could command.

"Come," continued Charles, "just for one little half-hour; you can't object to one little

half-hour, mother," and he handed Susan her bonnet and shawl.

Mrs. Hayling, seeing that she was not very likely to be attended to, whether she could or could not object to it, contented herself by begging them not to stay long, and to be sure and keep off the grass.

"You appear very dull and low-spirited this evening!" observed Charles to his companion, as soon as they had left the house.

"I do not feel very well," replied Susan.

"I was wrong, then, in wishing you to come out."

"No, no, the air will do me good—at least I hope so."

"I hope so, too," added Charles, "but if I might be allowed to judge, I should say your indisposition arises rather from the agitation of your mind than from ill health."

"I fear you are right," replied Susan.

"And why should you fear it?" asked Charles.

“O! I feel,” replied Susan, “that I am miserable; and that I never more can be happy on earth!”

“I do not understand you,” said Charles, in his most even-tempered tone.

“O! I am indeed most wretched—most miserable,” continued Susan. “I have entered in the path I was ever taught to shun; and, which both reason and imagination ever pictured to my mind as leading direct to destruction.”

“And what path may that be?” coolly inquired Charles.

“Can you ask me?” cried Susan, with surprise and increased emotion. “Did you not observe with what a steadfast gaze Mr. Layton’s eyes were fixed upon me—with what kind words, and with what a self-satisfied air, he took his leave of me, and can you ask why I am unhappy?”

“I did,” said Charles, replying to her first question; “and very glad I was to observe it, as

it gave me the much-wished for assurance that you had acted like a sensible girl, which I hope you are ; but, surely, something more than that must have occurred to cause you so much excitement."

"Something more !" echoed Susan, looking with a sort of mingled awe and wonder at her companion.

"Why, yes !" replied Charles, gaily, "or you must be one of the most easily-excited persons that I ever beheld. Why, what have you done? But you tell me I need not ask you; I must, therefore, conclude that you have proceeded no further than I advised you ; and if so—"

"Alas !" cried Susan, interrupting him, "have I not acted most unbecoming? Have I not encouraged Mr. Layton to look upon me with an expression that is hateful to my very soul? Nay, is he not, perchance, at this very moment, repeating to my mother the answers I gave him; and

will not she, fond as she is, and anxious for my welfare, go on her knees, and call down the blessing of God upon me?"

"And a blessing will rest upon you if you are sensible," observed Charles.

"Rather, say if I am innocent," exclaimed Susan, "for though Mr. Layton and my mother know not that their prayers and their thanksgivings are full of discord, yet the Almighty God, to whom they address themselves, sees and knows me as I am."

"You think of this matter much too seriously;" observed Charles, "whatever you may think, or however you may be displeased with me, I must—" Charles paused.

"I do not blame you—I am not displeased with you," replied Susan, hastily, "in giving me advice; I know you did it for the best. It is I that am wrong; I ought to have known better."

"You frighten yourself without cause," con-

tinued Charles, "and since you are not displeased with my friendly freedom, I do not scruple to say, that, by so doing, you make yourself appear very simple indeed. If you had committed the most heinous crime, you could not condemn yourself more heartily or earnestly than you have done."

"I have been taught—" began Susan.

"O yes! to be sure you have; and so we have all," said Charles, interrupting her. "We have all been taught to hate falsehood and shun iniquity; but how act they who have taught us this? Are our teachers the most godly—the most upright of the earth? Do they all act in accordance with their teaching? Think of that, and tell me if I am not warranted in repeating, you frighten yourself without cause? In truth, if you have done wrong, the action will justify itself, if viewed from the situation in which it was forced upon you."

"I was almost persuaded so myself," said Susan, "until it was too late."

"Nonsense!" remarked Charles, "it would have been too soon, at any time, if you had let it influence your conduct; but, if you would so much rather that it had been otherwise than it is, it is not yet too late for you to retrieve the step you have taken."

"Not too late!" cried Susan, eagerly, "tell me, oh, tell me, how I may make amends for the deception I have practised?"

"Confess it all to them, as you have done to me, and the consequence will be—"

"Do not tell me of the consequence," said Susan, interrupting him, "It is impossible that I can be more wretched than I am at present, but—" and in a moment the emotion of hope, that had been so suddenly kindled in her bosom, was swallowed up in despondency—"but will they not think that it is the mere expression of a childish passion?"

"Very likely!" replied Charles.

"And," continued Susan, "conclude that I have invented the story, and assumed a look of grief the better to prove my sincerity in such an unwished-for repentance? No, no! since it is done I must abide the consequence."

"There spoke the noble girl, and yet I think I could tell you a more effectual way to persuade them that what you say is true."

Susan looked inquiringly at her companion, while he continued, "Tell them that it was I advised it; but, that you have since thought how very wrong it was to deceive them, and therefore, have, without delay, confessed the truth."

"No, Charles," replied Susan, and she spoke with a degree of earnestness that at once assured him it came from her heart; "No! you cannot think I could be guilty of such a mean action—we will say no more about it."

"Nay," added Charles, laughing, "that would be running to the opposite extreme. I trust we

may again and again recur to the subject without fear or trembling ; you do not mean to follow up your kindness by naming the day of the wedding the next time he comes ? What you have said to day, you must remember, they forced upon you ; and that, in consequence, you acted purely in self-defence, and, by my advice, put them on a wrong scent, while you the better manage the matter nearer to your heart."

" And what is that ?" asked Susan, completely confounded and puzzled as to the aim she was pursuing.

" Your marriage with Edward," continued Charles, in a tone of irony, " or with myself, or with any one else ; always, of course, excepting Mr. Layton."

" Do not laugh at me, Charles."

" Not I, for the world," replied Charles, in the same tone as before.

Poor Susan, with her gentle, sensitive, and

excitable mind, it must be confessed, possessed no feature in it sufficiently firm to bear up against the cunning, and often repeated attacks of her companion; who, she could but be sensible, was as far her superior in mind as bodily strength. She, therefore, had for some-time, though insensibly to herself, looked up to him with a sort of childish wonder and respect; for, strange as it may appear, the bold conversation, she almost trembled to listen to, acted upon her as a charm, while its spirit entered more deeply into her heart, with an assurance that, henceforth, until an alteration should take place in her circumstances, she must cling to him, not only for advice, but to shield herself from the effects of her own bitter reflections. In short, without her being aware of the fact, she had now tacitly consented to be a mere puppet in his hands, to be moved and acted upon at his pleasure.

And yet, for any vile sin, save the deception he had practised against Mr. Layton, Susan lay her head upon her pillow that night as innocent and as pure as the most virtuous of her sex. And, it would be well, should any of my readers feel disposed to judge harshly of her conduct, to be careful that they do not paint, through the agency of their imaginations, her fault as greater than it really was.

The bitterness and sincerity of her repentance must not be supposed to have arisen solely from the fault she had committed; but, rather as she expressed herself, because she had entered in a path which she had ever been taught to shun, from the assurance, that at best it could only lead to disappointment and grief.

Many, very many there are, who have been brought up virtuously and religiously, that have experienced the feeling of Susan that night, and yet have been saved, by the goodness of the

Almighty, from the consequences which they surely would have partaken of, had they been left to themselves. Let them, then, be rather grateful for their own escape, than too hasty to condemn the object before them. Yet this is not said to palliate her offence, or in the remotest sense to encourage the practice of dissimulation or deception, for, as all actions that are evil are to be carefully shunned, so these, of all others, being the most insinuating and active, are, above all, to be guarded against with the most scrupulous attention to truth, and the soft whispering of our universal monitor—conscience.

Full of contending emotions, Susan, on the particular night I have been speaking of, courted her pillow for some weary hours in vain. It had no ease—no soothing forgetfulness to bestow, but appeared encompassed with stern reality, which, like the thorny hedge of the roadside was no sooner touched, than it reminded

her of her liability to injury and pain ; she strove to recommend her soul to God in prayer, but in vain ; her thoughts were unsteady, and defied her purpose, travelling over and over again the events of the past day.

The words of Charles had taken such hold upon her imagination, that, even in her lone chamber, in the midst of darkness, she fancied she heard him continually whispering in her ear, how very foolish it was for her to think so much about what she had done, since Mr. Layton had himself to thank for the treatment he had met with. Weaker and weaker, as the morning approached, became her own thoughts, and the action of conscience upon them, till, at last, exhausted nature gave up the struggle, and sleep insensibly stole upon her senses.

When she awoke from this not altogether un-blessed slumber, the all-glorious sun was high in the heavens, gladdening nature with its bright

refulgent smiles, and calling up a chorus of universal praise from hill and dale, all prodigal of life, **TO HIM**, the great creator of the wondrous whole.

The husbandman, long taught the necessity of living by the sweat of his brow, forgot the curse of sin in the blessings that his God had showered upon him, in tempering his justice with mercy. The scythe and the sickle were in full operation, for the harvest had fairly set in, and happy was the farmer's gaze, as he looked upon the reapers, as the full-eared corn fell beneath their hands, and the bright sun looked down full of promise, to guard it to his winter's store. Susan, after gazing for a few minutes on this busy scene, descended the stairs, and found Mrs. Hayling and Charles actively engaged at breakfast; Charles met her as she entered the room, with a look of anxious inquiry, but said nothing; while his mother began to make inquiries re-

specting her health, saying, "She had feared she was not well, and should have visited her some time since, had not Charles persuaded her from it."

"I was certain," observed Charles, "that you had merely over-slept yourself, and could not see the occasion there was for disturbing you."

Susan could only plead the truth, and confirm the statement of Charles, at which Mrs. Hayling was pleased and satisfied, but she could not let so favourable an opportunity escape her, without bestowing on her companions a lecture on her favourite subject—the pleasures and advantages of early rising.

To this Susan listened very patiently, happy that it was not on a more unpleasant subject, as she had reason to fear it might have been. It may be remembered, that Mrs. Hayling had, on the previous evening, expressed a wish to have some serious talk with her, which purpose

had been defeated, partly by Charles, but more by Susan's own dislike to listen to it. She had, however, no reason to suppose that she had entirely escaped the infliction, or that it would not be again attempted at a more favourable opportunity ; but, such was the case, for her friend Charles, taking advantage of her absence when he came in to breakfast, had mentioned the subject to his mother, and begged her for the present not to say anything more to Susan about Mr. Layton than she was absolutely obliged, as he felt certain it would only retard an object she was most earnest to promote.

“ But I do not wish to persuade her to this marriage,” said his mother.

“ Then the mere idle talk about it can do no good,” observed Charles.

“ I would only impress upon her mind, the seriousness of the obligation she is about to enter into.”

“And thereby fill her with doubt, fear, and vain regrets,” added Charles.

“Charles, I think,” said his mother, with more energy than she was in the habit of displaying in opposition to him, “I think I might, in such a case as this, be allowed to know best; I think I have had more experience than you have, and, therefore, am better able to advise.”

“O !” said Charles, in a careless tone, “if you are anxious to advise, do it by all means—do not fear I wish to oppose you; I will only beg you to remember, that it is possible, in your over anxiety to advise her for her good, you may proceed in a manner, that will only plunge her back into the gulf of doubt, from which, it may be, she has scarce escaped.”

“How, what do you mean?” asked his mother in her usual complaisant manner.

“Why !” replied Charles, after a little apparent study, “it appears most likely that Susan

had many arguments with herself, before she could give up her own childish passion, to the more mature judgment of her mother, and your talking to her—although I agree, if it were at a proper season, it might be very beneficial—would only, in her present state of mind, make her recur to her thoughtless passion with the more regret, as an escape from this, which seems surrounded with so many great and serious considerations.”

“And so indeed it is,” said Mrs. Hayling.

“And so you will say that every action of our life is;” added Charles, “but, as in the matter before us, Susan has been guided by her duty and filial feeling, it is most probable that she has already considered it in all its obligations and bearings; but, supposing she has not, as it rests entirely between a mother and her child, I think we cannot be too cautious in interfering.”

“There is some reason in your argument;”

replied Mrs. Hayling, "and, therefore, for the present, I will not say anything to her about it."

At this juncture, Charles thought proper, without further observation, to speak of something else, when the conversation consequently took another turn; and Susan, coming down soon afterwards, prevented the possibility of its being resumed.

The want of rest which Susan had experienced the previous part of the night, and the intense thought she had been subjected to, only tended to make her appearance more delicate, and, if possible, more beautiful. But Charles, after his first earnest gaze, paid no particular attention to her for some time; his whole mind appeared replete with pleasurable emotions. He had been, he said, amongst the reapers, and was full of joy to observe what fine crops of wheat they had got, he had no idea they were so heavy, before the sickle began its handy-work.

“I am glad to see you so very grateful;” observed Mrs. Hayling; “indeed, we have much cause to be continually offering up our thanksgivings to Almighty God for his many blessings bestowed upon us.”

“And the oats, and the barley,” continued Charles, without noticing what his mother had said. “they seem quite as favourable as the wheat. Would you like to go out and see how busy we are?” added he, addressing himself more particularly to Susan.

“Not at present!” she replied, “I must endeavour to make amends for my idleness, by assisting in the house; that is, if I may be allowed.”

Mrs. Hayling felt flattered, and answered that she should be very glad to employ her, as the harvesting having commenced, all hands would be busy out of doors, and she should be obliged to be cook, dairy-maid, and all sorts of things.

Charles had no objection to offer to this arrangement; indeed, it exactly coincided with his desire. Without reading, or philosophic reasoning, he had observed that, when activity and toil have sunk tranquilly to rest, the mind, (when not unusually excited,) is soothed into peaceful contemplation, and, as it were, feeds on the quiet scene around, allowing all impressions received therefrom, or therewith connected, to sink deeply into the heart, to be remembered far above the like occurrences in bustling mid-day life. In the evening, therefore, he had been alone in Susan's company as much as possible, and to the evening he now looked to have his invitation to walk in the corn-fields accepted of.

As he was, in every respect, the chief of the little party, the conversation generally took its tone from him; which, now that he was in such excellent spirits, became, if homely, full of ani-

mation. particularly so on his own part. This was enough to fill his mother's heart with gladness; her delight, indeed, was to see him happy. Even Susan thought she had never before sufficiently valued his appearance, so manly and full of energy did he appear; and, as she thought this, she struggled, if not to feel happy, at least to lead her companions to imagine that she was so; yet, despite all her care, the occurrences of yesterday would force themselves upon her mind, returning again and again, as often as driven out. She could not forget the situation she stood in with Mr. Layton, nor think of it without feeling more and more decidedly inclined to prove to him, at the earliest opportunity, how heartily and determinedly she would oppose the completion of his purpose.

Was it that the seeming happiness around her brought more vividly to her mind the joyousness of heart she had ever experienced

in the company of Edward, and made her value its memory the more, and feel more earnest to hail its return? It might be so, but, alas! I fear not; judging from subsequent events, I should rather say, she had fallen into the snare so artfully laid for her. Her eyes became rivetted to Charles, with an expression too fond for friendship, and more yielding than a sister's. "Did she love him?" The very question is alarming; and, instead of suggesting an answer, seems rather to demand, "what is love?"

Can that beautiful—that all-confiding passion, as poets paint it, and as youth wishes to identify it, depend on no inward or upright emotion of the soul? Is it excited, as well by hypocritical language and falseness, as by the pure effusion of the heart hedged round with truth? Alas! it so appears, notwithstanding all our longing and desiring to the contrary. The false assumption of it by one, excites in the breast of

another the true feeling; and thus it was with Susan. The apparent attention and devotion of Charles to her interest, struck her young imagination—although, she could not bring herself to approve of the doctrine he taught—as worthy of all gratitude and trust from her. Thus, most strangely, while she was talking to him of her affection for another, she was committing one of the greatest contradictions that our nature is capable of, inasmuch as her passion, insensibly to herself, was reversing its object. Yet, I much doubt, supposing circumstances had been favourable, I much doubt whether she could have ever felt that love for Charles, which she had experienced for Edward.

It appears far more probable, that her disturbed state of mind had sunk beneath an illusion—that a veil was, as it were, over her eyes, through which she saw but the shadow of the object before her. But, it is now to no purpose

to start suppositions as to its cause. The simple fact was as I have stated it; but, simple though it be, who will say that it does not contain a fearful warning to others, teaching the young and thoughtless to study, above all things, to become acquainted with the desires of their hearts, lest at any time, by a strange combination of circumstances, they should find themselves in a like situation to Susan's.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE breakfast was ended, and Charles, with a satisfaction bordering on joy, returned to observe and direct the labours of the field; Mrs. Hayling to the duties of the house; and Susan, according to her proposal, to her assistance. If she felt less satisfaction in her own thoughts than Charles did in his, it was because she had not meditated to bring about the present state of her feelings; and, therefore, could not exult, as he did, in the success of his plans; but she felt, as she afterwards said, too much pleasure on a subject which ought to have been painful to her.

In the afternoon of this very day, when she would, for the first time, have been almost content to learn that there was no such person as Edward in the world; he, as we have seen, was

on his way to pay her his first visit since their unhappy separation.

Could he have seen with what indifference he was viewed—by her, whose person was more dear to him than all the world beside, would he have proceeded thus, with a light and joyous heart, to throw himself upon her bosom, and endeavour to forget all the little vexations and disappointments in, as he trusted, their mutual dependance for happiness on each other? It has been repeatedly and wisely said, that our ignorance makes us happy—that, however terrible the future may appear, when we are excited, to learn how it will deal with us at some eventful crisis; and, would have a year rush upon us, and depart as a moment, and yet, must in ignorance, abide its ordinary course—that still it is the sole charm that binds us, not only to happiness, but even to the earth itself; for, deprive us of the gladdening sensation of hope—and what is

hope without ignorance of the future?—which we must be deprived of if we could look into futurity, as all things must, necessarily, end gloomily here; and who, for a moment, could drink out of the cup of sweet contentment, much more that of happiness. No; it is past dispute, that “whatever is, is best.” And this Edward experienced, as he, with a beating heart, and uncontrollable emotions, approached Field-hill, and the presence of his dear Susan, arguing with himself that he had nothing to fear; he could have nothing to fear, for he was acting in accordance with her expressed desire.

It was getting towards evening by the time he arrived; when, not having the slightest hope of meeting her at the appointed place, he went on, cautiously approaching the house. While yet, at a distance from it, he discovered a female looking out of one of the bed-room windows—Was it the object of his hopes? He could not

tell; a strange dimness gathered over his eyes; he wiped and rubbed them; still his vision was indistinct, wavering, and uncertain; he ventured to make the pre-concerted signal; he thought it was answered, and was confirmed in his opinion, when the person disappeared from his sight, and in a few moments re-appeared at the door, and, after looking anxiously round two or three times, left the house and came bounding towards him. He was not deceived; no, no, it was Susan! his own dearly beloved Susan. He stood as if fixed in the earth; struggling to free himself, yet unable to command his trembling limbs; his heart beat violently, and his whole frame quivered as the aspen; while a fearful sensation of suffocation rose in his throat, which made him gasp for breath. When she had reached to within a few yards of the spot where he stood, he started convulsively from his trance, and ran tottering to meet her; which having done, he seized her in

his arms, and pressed her again and again to his panting bosom, and, instead of words, heaped kisses on kisses upon her lips.

As soon as he could speak, he exclaimed, "At last, then, we meet! O happiness inexpressible! They could not—they shall not finally part us! Therefore, fear not! fear not! If they threaten us more, we will prefer beggary to their favour; we will leave them and their sordid views, to combat the world together, young and inexperienced as we are;" and again he pressed her to his bosom, but, in a moment he drew back with a shudder, for she was passive in his arms. Doubt rushed upon his brain, but it vanished before its hateful form became embodied. It was pure bashfulness and modesty that checked her feelings: it must be that, it could be nothing else; and, again and again he pressed her to his heart, exclaiming, "And what says my Susan, will she leave all the

allurements of the world's worship for one so poor as I am?"

"Oh, Edward!" cried Susan, speaking for the first time, "Have I not said I would do so?"

"Yes, you have, you have; and that assurance, and the hope arising therefrom, has been to my heart, in the darkness of our absence, as a beacon of light, shedding its lustre on the future, and, pointing to it, as a scene of happiness, to reward us for present pain. But, Susan, it was not kind of you to let me remain so long in ignorance of the place of your abode. Had I known it, I would have visited you long ere this; and I do think we should then have escaped much anxiety of heart, and many a sad and weary hour. You see I am flattering myself, by supposing that your sufferings, arising from our separation, have been equally poignant as my own."

"Indeed, I have suffered much," said Susan.

"We must look the more earnestly to the future," replied Edward.

“Alas!” began Susan, “the future, as far as we are concerned, appears to me, equally dreary as the past; we have nothing to hope, but—”

“Nothing to hope!” exclaimed Edward, interrupting her, “Nothing to hope!” he repeated again, gazing, with wonder and astonishment at the expression of her countenance, which seemed, indeed, to bear witness that he had nothing to hope, so quiet and passionless, did it appear. “Nothing to hope!” cried he, for the third time; “Nothing to hope! You amaze me. Have we not rather got every thing to hope? Are we not young, in health, and fervent in our desires, dwelling more on the happiness of each other than on one’s own?”

“Need I point out to you how we are situated?” said Susan; “How, entirely by the will of others, I was sent from Marshend, to be placed here? Have I not been at their mercy, and shall I not so continue?”

“No, no, you shall not!” exclaimed Edward,

“let them not urge us too far, or their imprudence may beget a like imprudence in us, which will for ever put it out of their power to part us.”

“Such thoughts,” replied Susan, “have often crossed my mind ; but, we must endeavour to think more correctly, and not rush into a life of trouble and misery.”

“Of trouble and misery ! O, Susan, Susan, you were wont to speak more cheerfully ; but, I will not urge the adoption of any such rash act ; we will submit, contentedly, to your mother’s power. But, O ! do not let us deceive ourselves, by supposing it greater than it really is ; I know she disapproves of our intimacy, and will, for some time, throw every obstacle in its way ; but, she will not, she cannot, do so for ever. Let us be constant to each other, and passively dutiful to her, and she will ultimately become our warmest friend. You do not answer, dear Susan ;

wherefore are you silent? I do not speak against your mother—I will not urge you to act in opposition to her, but, there is a wide difference between your not opposing her, and falling into her every wish.”

“Parents, Susan, I speak it with deference, are not infallible, therefore, neither reason nor justice demands implicit obedience to them, from their offspring, when they have arrived at years of discretion.”

“Would you scorn their counsel?” inquired Susan.

“No! indeed, Susan, I would not; the very name of parent is dear to me—I honour it as a mere word, and think with love and reverence on its meaning. In my cool moments of reflection,” continued Edward, “I have long considered, that, for a child to rush headlong into an engagement against their wish, is a most disgusting and hateful action; but with this, I yield not up our natural birthright.”

“Our natural birthright?” repeated Susan, musingly.

“It is for a child,” continued Edward, “to listen with respect and attention to a parent’s desire; but, if the desire cannot be complied with, freely and happily, the child is guilty of no undutifulness, by remaining passive, standing aloof, alike from the accomplishment of its parent’s desire, as from its own; until, in the course of time, the justice of the one’s views, and the fallacy of the other’s, shall be proved to their mutual satisfaction. Yes, Susan, if— if we continue virtuous, and constant to each other, the time will come, when those who would part us now, will be foremost to witness our union.”

“I would that I could hope so,” cried Susan.

“And can you not?” exclaimed Edward, “you surely cannot repent of our engagement?” As he said this, he fixed his eyes so searchingly

upon her, that she quailed beneath his gaze, and he continued, "No, no! I am sure you do not repent it; be not then fearful, I will throw myself at your mother's feet—will humble myself to Mr. Layton, and implore them to think of what they are doing, ere it is too late. Of you, I ask nothing more than the continued assurance of your love, and all fervency of hope for the future."

"You know," replied Susan, "I did not scruple to own how entirely I was yours, when there appeared a chance of our union; if I could see any such probability now, why should I not repeat it, and lead you indeed to hope in all things?"

"And is there less probability now, than when we last parted? Oh, Susan, Susan, what have you done? Can I believe that you, in so short, so brief, a time, have been so tempted, as to forget your promise to me?"

“No, indeed, indeed I have not,” replied Susan, “But what could I do, or what can I do? you know not how I am situated.”

“Believe me,” cried Edward, “I have grieved for your sufferings more than for my own; I have pictured you, lost in grief and disappointment, but never, never, as having withdrawn your affection from me; no, no, I never could have doubted that, even had your temptation been twenty times as great as it has been. Oh! do not teach me to curse Mr. Layton or your mother. And yet, can I do otherwise, if I am to believe, that through their machinations, not only my own happiness is to be blighted, but yours also, which God knows, is far dearer to me than my own?”

The earnestness of true feeling, so passionately displayed by Edward, failed not to produce an effect on the mind of Susan, directly opposed to the pernicious counsels of Charles. Still she

hesitated to yield up her heart to its native impulse, and make Edward, as she ought to have done, in preference to Charles, the sharer of her secret thoughts. After some time, she answered almost in a whisper, that she was under an obligation for the present, not to enter into any further engagements with him.

"I do not desire it," answered Edward, quickly, "only do not bid me cancel that already between us."

"I have not desired any such thing," said the wavering Susan.

"If I may not hope for the future, to what purpose can it exist?" cried her lover.

"If to hope," replied Susan, "can add to your happiness, I would have you hope; but, consider well, should it prove but a delusion."

"It will not, Susan—it cannot, if you bid me hope," exclaimed Edward, interrupting her.

"Let us say no more about it," said Susan.

“Susan!” replied Edward, in a pointed, emphatic manner, yet, as free from emotion as he could speak; “to what purpose can we be silent? Is not our conversation, as it were, a part of our very souls, which now are lost in doubt and indecision?”

“I have given you as much reason, for what I have said as I possibly can,” replied Susan; and then adding, in a hurried manner, “If you love me—if you have the least regard for my happiness, you will not, at present, press me further.”

“That I do love you, and that your happiness is very dear to me, I am sure you cannot doubt, why then should there be any mystery between us? Do you know anything—ought you to know anything you dare not trust me with? I see I displease you by my perseverance; but, indeed, indeed, I cannot forbear—it is unkind—it is ungenerous to suffer me to continue in a state of miserable doubt; believe me, I never

shall—I never can cease to assail you thus, while I am permitted to enjoy your company, if I do not also enjoy your whole confidence.”

“How can I think my company is so dear to you, when you would thus rashly risk its loss?”

“O, Susan! do not speak so lightly of my anxiety about you.”

“I would not so speak, nor have you suppose I feel—” said Susan, looking feverishly round, as she had done several times before, during the progress of their conversation.

“I cannot understand you,” said Edward, “I do not appear even to enjoy your attention; you would not deprive me of hope! yet, at the same time, you take from me its food—its soul—its essence; you appear to wish to wrap that which should be plain and simple as day, in a veil of mystery, dark and impenetrable as night. Your eyes wander from me, as if in expectation that something fearful, and to be dreaded, was

hanging over us. Tell me, Susan, what does it all mean, I cannot leave you thus?"

"Your are more curious than wise," said Susan, somewhat pettishly.

"It is not idle curiosity that makes me so earnest," murmured Edward.

"Are you not aware," continued Susan, "that your visit here, if known at Marshend, would be the signal, for my being carried to a greater distance; and, has it not entered your imagination, that we may be observed at the present time?"

"Observed! who shall observe us?" cried Edward, "have you any about you, base enough to become a spy upon the actions of others, or an eaves-dropper to their conversation? If you have, you know not how gladly I would have them pointed out to me, that I might brand them with contempt and scorn, undisguised and unqualified!" For a moment after this burst of

honest indignation, Edward was silent, when the face of Charles, livid with rage, rose a few inches above the hedge near which they were standing, but it was withdrawn as suddenly as it had appeared, unnoticed by either of the others; and Edward continued, "Tell me; do you expect the presence of such persons? Yet why do I ask?—what have we to fear? The heart full of affection, and love, laughs at distance; the tyranny or foolishness of our friends, may make your voice a stranger to my ear, but they cannot keep your image from my heart, or stay my imagination from flying to you, or drawing you to it with a satisfaction inconceivable to them. Talk not then of distance, you never can be so far from me, as when your heart is selfish of its knowledge."

"But, I may have become attached to the place," said Susan, "and not wish to leave it, until my return home!" Again the face of

Charles might be seen, but, how different was its expression now—it seemed to say, “She’s mine.”

“I should grieve,” said Edward, despondingly, “to hear you say, you had become attached to this place, or, indeed, to any other, as I fondly hoped that your imagination was too full of past scenes, to allow any new associations to engage its attention. But, Susan, we trifle with each other sadly. If you love me, as you have done, why—why should you hesitate to say so?”

Susan did not answer.

“Were not the thought horrible, and worse than death to my imagination, I should almost suppose that you had given encouragement to—to—to—” Edward struggled with himself, but could not finish the hateful sentence; while Susan continued silent and motionless as a statue, but her face was crimsoned with shame.

“ Good God !” exclaimed Edward, after a few moments silence, “ am I awake—do you hear me, and strive not to answer? Had any one, one short hour since, whispered such a thing to me—had not my indignation choked me. my hand should so have dealt with the speech of the false and base detractor, as I should have thought him; yes Susan, I should have called him false, and justly so—say, should I not?”

“ How can I answer?” murmured Susan.

“ How, but with truth and confidence?” cried Edward.

“ No, I cannot—I must not!” sobbed Susan, with her eyes still fixed on the ground.

“ You must not! Do you tell me you must not?” exclaimed Edward, in a transport of passion; “ by heaven!” he continued, seizing her by both her hands, “ there is no power under heaven shall rob me of your confidence!”

The vehemence of his manner alarmed Susan;

she gave a faint scream, but did not attempt to escape from his grasp.

“Do not be alarmed, Susan,” he added in a subdued tone, “I did not mean to harm you.”

“And if you did, young man,” said a voice by his side, “your intention, I suspect, would go without its corresponding action.”

The eyes of Edward and Susan were in a moment turned to the spot whence the sound had issued, when they beheld Charles, full of all the surprise and wonderment, to be expected from one, who had but just become an observer of the scene before him.

If Susan had felt remorse for her past conduct, and been wrought upon by Edward to the point of confessing her fault to him, the time for that confession had now passed away for ever!

“What, Edward, is it you?” said Charles, “is this dealing justly with your master?”

“Ah!” exclaimed Edward, “is it so—are you the spy—you the eaves-dropper? Talk of justice! ‘Out, out on ye!’”

“Go on,” said Charles, in an unruffled voice.

“It is in vain,” cried Edward, in a transport of passion and disappointment; “I have heard that evil is inherent to your very nature; away, away, my heart sickens at your presence.”

“Go on, go on,” again repeated Charles, as calmly as before, “but, let this assurance accompany your going: I shall not, away, away, but remain here, despite your denunciation, to guard Susan from your brutal violence.”

“It would be well,” retorted Edward, “to assure yourself that I have an intention to commit violence, before you impute it to me.”

Charles was not one to be checked or intimidated, when he was opposed to a person he did not fear; he, therefore, replied quietly, “that, whatever his motive might have been, was best

known to himself, but that the effect it had produced on his companion was not to be doubted."

"If I have offended or frightened her," cried Edward, "I do not want to be informed of it by an officious meddler, nor do I see what business you have to interfere, in the manner you show a disposition to do."

"You had better return home with me;" said Charles to Susan. Then turning to Edward, he added; "you know, Miss Thomson is a guest of my mother's, and, therefore, without further words, I believe, I may venture to say, that I consider myself justified in seeing that she is not abused."

"Nor will I be abused;" began Edward; but seeing Susan look imploringly towards him, as if begging him to be silent, he checked himself.

"Come, come," said Charles, "you must not be too full of passion; I do not desire to interfere farther than is necessary. If Miss Thomson

wishes to remain with you, I have no objection to leave you together; but, if she wishes to retire, I shall assuredly protect her to the house, and leave you to reconcile it with yourself, as best you may."

"I am not well, I will go in," murmured Susan.

"And must we part thus?" said Edward.

Charles went a few steps in advance, as if to give them an opportunity to take instant leave of each other.

"Do not think unkindly of me," said Susan, "I will never become wife to another, without your consent."

"And I," said Edward, "will never refuse it, when you desire it of me; but, until that time—" emotion choked his utterance; he could not complete the sentence.

"Good bye!" sobbed Susan.

"O God!" cried Edward, and rushed from her side.

CHAPTER XV.

“Now, tell me,” said Charles, after they had proceeded a few steps in silence, “was I not right when I told you how foolishly this stolen interview would end?”

“I did wrong,” replied Susan, “in sending for him; but, do not increase my sufferings with your displeasure.”

“I should be sorry to add to them for one moment,” said Charles; “and yet,” added he, “the only use we can put our thoughts to when they convict us of having acted foolishly, is, to repeat them over and over again, so that they may be ever ready, like a honest friend, to warn us to avoid the like error in future.”

“Would you have me promise never to see him again while I remain here?” asked Susan, timidly.

“ I do not say, never !” replied Charles; “ but certainly, not for the present; at least, not without having previously consulted your friend on the matter.”

“ I can promise that most freely.”

“ Enough,” said Charles, “ and what has just passed we will say no more about.”

“ And yet,” said Susan, “ if Mr. Layton or my mother should know that he has been here, will they not send me away ?”

“ If you will trust to me in all things,” replied Charles, “ I will manage them so as to prevent anything of the sort from taking place.”

“ Who should I now trust but you ?” said Susan. “ I have implicitly followed your advice, when it was less pleasing to me than it is now: yes! and I will follow it; or, at least, will give it my most serious consideration.”

“ Fear nothing, then,” said Charles, as he, for the first time, pressed the yielding form of

Susan to his bosom, and imprinted a kiss upon her lips. This, however, he had no sooner accomplished, than he hastily released her, and begged her to pardon him if he had, in the excess of his friendship, taken a liberty he ought not to have done ; concluding by saying, that he was so excited with sensations of pleasure at seeing her so well and patiently resolved, that, at the moment, he had been carried quite beyond his sober senses.

Susan hung down her head in silence ; a thousand conflicting thoughts possessed her mind, and she knew not what to answer.

Charles then strove to draw her into conversation on the business of the day, but she appeared neither able nor willing to attend to it ; and, as they were now near the house, she begged to be allowed to go in, resolved, in her own mind, to plead indisposition, and thus escape further observation for the night. But,

in this she was sadly disappointed ; for, on entering the house she heard her mother in conversation with Mrs. Hayling.

Mr. Layton, on his return to Marshend, the previous day, had lost no time in calling his housekeeper to council, to impart to her the tidings of his happiness, as also to determine on their future mode of proceeding. After some little deliberation it was resolved, that no time should be lost in appointing a day for the consummation of their most ardent desires : it was also further resolved, that Mrs. Thomson should go on the following day to Fieldhill, and, if she found it necessary to bring Susan to the point, she should exert the utmost authority of a mother.

The better to disguise what they were about from Edward, Mr. Layton said he would find employment for him each day, in a widely different direction ; so that, even should he dis-

cover it, he might by no possibility have it in his power to see Susan, and plague her with his unreasonable and childish passion. But, authority grows weak; nay, it is too often dashed aside, and shattered into atoms, when rashly opposed to the young and ardent desires of youth. Such, however, was not, at that time, the case with Edward; as we have seen that he, without being acquainted with the motive that urged him from home, or without resorting to any extraordinary means, had rendered all their scheming, as far as he was concerned, abortive; and, had he found the same energy of mind on the part of Susan, accompanied with a like constancy of heart, Mr. Layton, in the midst of his happiness, and on the eve of triumph, might have suddenly discovered an application to the old and trite saying, that—

“There’s many a slip
Between the cup and the lip.”

But, to return to my story.

“ You are surprised to see me, Susan !” said Mrs. Thomson to her, as she entered the room with a look of astonishment.

“ I did not expect to find you here, indeed !” said Susan. “ When did you come ?”

“ Oh ! I have not been here long,” replied her mother. “ I had an opportunity of a ride over ; and, as I thought you would be glad to see me, I embraced it.”

“ And when do you return ?” inquired Susan.

“ In the course of an hour or two. But you look unwell, Susan ; or have you been walking and are fatigued ?”

“ I have not walked very far,” replied Susan.

“ Then you are unwell ?” said her mother, greatly agitated.

“ Do not be alarmed,” said Charles, who had just entered the room : “ Susan has been a little frightened, but, I am sure, she will soon recover from it.”

“She was never very subject to fear,” observed her mother; and then, turning to Susan, begged to know what it had been occasioned by.

Charles interposed, by hinting that the cows had done it.

Mrs. Hayling, having often observed that Susan was not over partial to cows, doubted not but this was the true source of her alarm; and began, by assuring her, as she had often done before, that they were very harmless, and would not hurt any one.

Charles could scarcely contain his laughter, at his mother’s expense; and, seeing that no further explanation was necessary, left the room—rightly judging, that whatever Mrs. Thomson might have to say to Susan, would be much better communicated to her in his absence.

“How could you be so very silly,” said Mrs.

Thomson, in a rallying tone, to Susan, "as to fear a few poor harmless cows; but, I suppose you have been here so long, and have become so lonely, that you will soon be afraid of your own shadow?"

"Why, no! I don't think Susan finds it so very lonely here," observed Mrs. Hayling; "and, indeed, I have known some very bold people, in other respects, little less fearful than Susan is of cows."

"I once saw a dreadful accident happen from one," said Susan; willing to favour the deceit, that her companions might not seek for any other cause for the agitation which she could not controul.

"O, I dare say," continued Mrs. Hayling; "many accidents may have arisen from them, but those we have now are as quiet as lambs, and quite as harmless."

"I shall not be afraid of them for the future," observed Susan.

“I am sure you are treated very kindly here,” said Mrs. Thompson; “but, I dare say, Susan, you will be very glad to get back again to Marshend.” In a moment, the countenance of Susan, which had been so pale before, was overspread with crimson. Her mother continued, “You can now do just as you please—remain here, or return home with me.”

“I am very fond of Marshend,” said Susan; “but, I have experienced so much kindness from Mrs. Hayling, that I could not think of so suddenly leaving her.”

“I am not particularly anxious that you should,” said her mother; “I only mention it to let you know how entirely you are the mistress of your own actions.” Seeing that Susan did not answer, her mother continued, “I wish you to understand, that this is the result of your considerate behaviour of yesterday.”

“I must beg you to remember,” observed

Susan, with more agitation, "that that behaviour was the result of your own most earnest desire ; and, therefore, it is not proper for me to have all the merit of the action."

"We will not argue about that," replied her mother. "By doing as you have done, you have filled up an aching void that your previous behaviour had left in my heart—the motive or consideration that urged you to it is nothing, compared with the happiness which must thence arise."

After this, there was a silence for a few moments, when the conversation, as if by mutual consent, glided into a less interesting strain; and, when its former tone was again renewed, as it was several times in the course of an hour, it was a mere repetition, with slight variations, of what has been recorded above. It will, therefore, be only necessary to state, that Mrs. Thomson remained about two hours at Field-

hill; and, although she could not cause the object of her visit to progress with all the expedition she desired, still she had no reason to complain of the capriciousness of Susan; for, if she had struggled against advancing, she had sought no mean excuse to retreat from her already-plighted word.

Alas! Susan felt not a like satisfaction. If she had not advanced her real interest—as her mother was pleased to call her marriage with Mr. Layton—she had increased, in a ten-fold degree, the real perplexities of her situation; and, when she retired to bed that night, it might, with truth, be said, she felt not—

“The balm of sweet repose,
“Nor knew the happiness of a mind at ease.”

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Edward had parted from Susan in the unsatisfactory and distressing manner as related—heated with every emotion that is painful to the human heart, he rushed, he knew not whither, in a state of abstraction from all surrounding objects; and, in which state he had doubtless long continued, had he not been guided by a plan adopted in the earlier part of the day, which now mechanically urged him, with all imaginable speed, towards home.

Fortunately, no accident retarded his progress, and he reached Marshend some time before Mr. Layton had expected him; who, thereupon, received him very graciously, and commended him for the diligent and trust-worthy manner in which he had accomplished the business intrusted to his care.

Edward, having answered very briefly, expressed an intention of going out for a short time; to which, it being after office-hours, Mr. Layton had no objection to offer—and thus ended their first interview, after Edward had become fully sensible of the gulf that yawned between them.

As soon as he had reached the street he was joined by his friend Henry, who had been, for some time, impatiently awaiting his return, to learn how he had succeeded in the object of his visit. With the sanguine temperament of youth, he had hoped that all things would happen as he had pictured them in his imagination.—That Edward and Susan would again renew their vow of eternal fidelity; so that, in the end, Mr. Layton and Mrs. Thomson might repent of their foolish project, and allow ~~the~~ his young friends to reap the fruit of their constancy. It was, therefore, with much surprise

that he beheld the clouded brow of his companion, and heard, in reply to his inquiries, answers as desponding and sorrowful as unlooked for.

At first, he was led to suppose that something had occurred to prevent his speaking to Susan, or, that some accident had befallen her ; but his suppositions were soon set at rest by Edward, who entered fully into the conversation that had taken place between them, and concluded by bursting into tears, and asking him how he thought he ought now to proceed.

This was a question Henry had anticipated, yet he felt utterly at a loss how to answer it. With the interest he felt in the matter, it appeared to him that, if Susan could be false enough to have entered into another engagement while she had one existing with him, she was not worth a moment's thought or regret.—At the same time, he feared to give expression

to his sentiments, as he could not doubt but the distress of his friend arose from his unwearied affection for her, however unworthy she might appear.

“You do not answer me,” said Edward; “would you leave it to my own thoughts to suggest a remedy?”

“Indeed, I know not how to suggest one myself,” replied Henry.

“Poor Susan!” cried Edward; “they have surrounded her with difficulties on every side—they have done, I am sure they have done, all in their power to draw her mind from me.”

“But, ought they, in consequence, to have succeeded?” asked Henry; and then, after a moment’s silence, seeing that Edward did not reply, he continued, “Judging from my own feelings, I should say, if you have reason to doubt her truth, you ought to endeavour to banish her at once and for ever from your heart.”

“ You speak from inexperience,” replied Edward, “ and, therefore, talk of impossibilities.— Could you have doted on her as I have done— have had no pleasurable thought in your mind that she was not intermingled with, even as the colours of the rainbow are mingled together, you would then know how hard a thing it would be for me to banish her from my mind for a moment; how, then, could I expect to do it for life? No! I must either overcome the difficulties which have grown up between us, or misery and wretchedness are mine for ever!”

Henry was too much affected to make any further attempt to enforce his opinion. He saw that Edward had too long looked upon Susan, as one possessed of goodness equal to her beauty, to allow him, for a moment, to suppose that she could become otherwise, unless, by the machinations and misrepresentations of those about her; and, that it would not only be use-

less, but cruel, at the present time, to attempt to enforce a different opinion.

“In the heat of my imagination,” continued Edward, “when her unkindness was yet fresh upon my mind, and my spirit was aroused to a full sense of my wrongs, I did think that I could at once proceed to extremities, and either gain her back to truth, or banish her for ever from my mind.”

“And can you be less resolved now?” asked Henry.

“I am even as a child,” replied Edward, “and must be guided by circumstances.”

“You have not, as you proposed, spoken to Mr. Layton?” inquired his friend.

“No! I have not. I had almost persuaded myself that that was the best course I could pursue, and that I had sufficient courage for the encounter; but, I soon found that I had miserably deceived myself. The manner in

which he would speak of her would only add to my sufferings."

After a slight pause, Edward continued, his emotion increasing with every word, "I could have borne anything, had I but the assurance that Susan still held me dear; but, to feel that each day is, with its progress, taking her farther from me—not through my own misconduct, nor her own desire, but, through the hateful selfishness and deception of those who ought to have been foremost to place her happiness on the sure foundation of truth.—God will reward them for their folly; but alas, alas! we shall be most miserable."

Henry, seeing that his excitement was increasing, interrupted him with an inquiry as to whether he would like him to speak to Mr. Layton.

This was sufficient to recall Edward's wandering thoughts. After a short time, he,

with many thanks, eagerly accepted the proposal.

Some days, however, elapsed, before Henry could find an opportunity sufficiently favourable for his purpose. He was afraid to seek an interview with Mr. Layton, lest he should put it into his power to make it as brief as he thought proper; and the old gentleman's lameness, for some time, prevented him from indulging in his evening walks by the sea-side, to make his observations on the weather—which he had long been in the habit of doing, for the edification of the good people of the town. In the course of a few evenings, however, to the inexpressible delight of Henry, the walks were resumed; when, as if purely by accident, ere he had arrived scarce mid-way between the town and the sea, he was met by him, and greeted with the following observation:—

“A fine warm evening, sir!”

“Very!” replied Mr. Layton, and was passing on.

“Do you think we shall have a storm?” inquired Henry. “I think I saw it lightning a few minutes since in the south-west.”

In saying this, he well knew he was attacking Mr. Layton on his weak-side, and was, thereby, almost certain of engaging his attention.

“You surely must be mistaken,” said Mr. Layton; “I have not observed the slightest symptoms of which you speak; but, if you will walk with me to the sea-side, perhaps I shall be better enabled to answer your query.”

Henry readily accepted the invitation; and, after a few more observations respecting the weather had passed between them, was about to commence on the real object of their meeting; but, he was diverted from his purpose by the abrupt and open manner in which his companion began to speak of his own affairs.

"I suppose you have heard," began Mr. Layton, "that I am going to retire from business?"

"No! indeed I have not, sir," replied Henry.

"O, I thought every one knew it by this time," said Mr. Layton; and then, after a pause, added, "I believe my apprentice and you are very intimate?"

"Yes! we have long been like brothers to each other," replied Henry.

"Then I may speak about him without reserve," said Mr. Layton, "and tell you of something which appears likely to be very interesting to both of you, and which I have already, in part, made him acquainted with. I believe it now wants about a year to the expiration of his apprenticeship?"

"Fifteen months, sir," observed Henry.

"You seem very particular about the time!"

"I have reason to be," replied Henry, "as

Edward and I came to Marshend within a month of each other."

"Well, I was about to say," continued Mr. Layton, "that it will be necessary he should serve his full time, for him to obtain many privileges essential to his getting on in life; and, yet, after the confidential manner in which I have treated him, I do not like to leave him, unconditionally, in the hands of a stranger; I have, therefore, made it part of the agreement with my successor, that Edward shall be only nominally his apprentice, during the remainder of his time."

"You are very good," said Henry.

"I have been thinking," continued Mr. Layton, "that if, as I am informed, an engagement does exist between him and your sister; supposing your father does not disapprove of it—"

"I have never heard of any such engagement," said Henry, interrupting him.

“I would give them,” continued Mr. Layton, not paying the slightest attention to his companion, “a trifle to commence business with a few miles distant; where, at the present time, I know there is a small concern to be purchased cheap, and well suited to a young beginner.”

“You have been very plain with me, sir,” said Henry, “and have spoken very kindly of my sister. I do not see that I am called upon to inquire into the motive of this kindness; but, I must tell you, that our present meeting has been long and earnestly sought by me, for a purpose very closely connected with the communication you have just made to me.”

“Oh, indeed!” said Mr. Layton, “you were deputed by Edward, I suppose?”

“I was,” replied Henry, earnestly.

“Well, what does he think of the matter?”

“I cannot take upon me to say all that he thinks,” replied Henry, “but I will repeat to you all that he has said respecting it.—”

“Aye! there is a thick cloudy mist rising in the south-west, certainly,” observed Mr. Layton, interrupting his companion. “Did you say you saw it lightning?”

“I thought so,” replied Henry.

“We had better return to the town,” said Mr. Layton; and he began to hurry homewards.

“May I beg you, sir,” said Henry, “to listen to me for a few moments?”

“You can consider my proposal,” said Mr. Layton, “and talk it over with Edward.”

“But, he will not patiently listen to me,” said Henry. “If I were to begin to talk to him about it, he would hurry away from me as fast as you are going now, sir.”

“Tut, tut!” said Mr. Layton, “I am not hurrying from you—it is from the rising storm.”

“If you will not listen to me at proper length,” replied Henry, “I must, to fulfil my

promise to Edward, tell you at once, since I see you are so decidedly bent upon your purpose, that, although he has no reason to dislike my sister—”

Mr. Layton, hearing this, walked a little slower. Perhaps, (thought he) he means, after all, to accept my proposal; only, he does not like to be seen to do it, without a little proper hesitation. “Ah, well!” said he, aloud, “perhaps, after all, the storm will wear off—I think I observe it taking a more easterly direction. What were you saying?” added he, turning to his companion.

“I was endeavouring to impress upon your mind, sir, how much the happiness of two young people was in your keeping.”

“I have told you what I will do for them,” said Mr. Layton; “but, I do not wish you to suppose that I consider I am doing more than my duty in rewarding a faithful and trust-

worthy servant, and, therefore, not entitled to feel any very extraordinary satisfaction about the matter."

"I fear, sir," remarked Henry, "that you mistake my meaning. You seem to suppose that I am alluding to Edward and my sister.—Do not leave me, sir, I beseech you; but hear me, and believe that what I say is not the result of a mere officious interference."

"Well, what have you to say?" inquired Mr. Layton, impatiently.

"Do not be angry, sir," replied his companion; "for what I would say requires your most cautious and deliberate consideration. Edward charged me to say, that what you propose is most hateful to him—not on account of any dislike he has to my sister, but, rather, that because his whole soul is in the keeping of another; and that, since you proposed it to him, he has become acquainted with the motive which prompted your apparent kindness."

“He is a very foolish young man,” said Mr. Layton. “I suppose he still fancies himself attached to Miss Thomson?”

“I can assure you, sir,” said Henry, “that it is no fancy on his part. The engagement which his heart has entered into with her, is an engagement that death alone can terminate.”

“What do you say?” inquired Mr. Layton, in alarm; “a clandestine —— !”

“No, sir! you again mistake me. I do not mean that they have entered into any engagement which the laws of the country will sanction to enable him to possess her person; but, that his love for her is equal to that which he feels for his heart’s blood; and, that she, having once accepted him, he will feel justified in believing, that, in the eyes of heaven, she is his, though deception and pride may have wrested her from him.”

“And what is all this to me?” asked Mr. Layton.

“Can you ask that question, sir, of one who must, of necessity, have had much less experience in the ways of the world than yourself? Surely, you cannot fail to observe, that if, from this difference, any unhappiness should come to pass, you will be the great and chief cause of it, if you, knowing what you do, still persist in parting them—the desire of whose hearts, I again repeat, are so interwoven with each other, that neither of them will be able to taste happiness apart. This, sir, is the substance of what I promised Edward to deliver to you. I would have done it in a less abrupt manner, had you been more patient to listen.” Having said this, he was going off in a different direction from that in which they were walking, but, Mr. Layton, seeing his purpose, desired him to walk on with him a little farther, apparently, very

unwilling that he should leave him with the impression then upon his mind.

“You appear,” said Mr. Layton, “to be only in the confidence of one of the party who has taken upon himself to assume a great deal of what is not true of the other.”

“I should be sorry, sir, to state an untruth to you of myself, or to repeat it from another.” replied Henry.

“But, are you not aware you run a great risk by doing so,” said Mr. Layton, in a persuasive tone, “when you presume to know what is passing in the mind of Miss Thomson, when neither Edward nor yourself can have seen her for nearly three months past.”

“I can only answer, sir, by saying, that I believe I have had sufficient means of ascertaining the truth of what I have spoken. I repeat, I might have taken a more satisfactory way to explain myself, had you been inclined to listen

to it. I now, however, trust you will do what, in a more unworthy matter, you charged me—consider it well; and believe me, that I should be very sorry to offend you:” saying which, he bade Mr. Layton “Good night,” and hurried off, regardless of his desire that he would stop.

“There is no such thing as opening the eyes of these hot-brained boys to their own interest,” muttered Mr. Layton, as he proceeded on his way home, anything but satisfied with the proceedings of his apprentice.

Henry immediately went in search of Edward, and found him indulging in, rather than enjoying, a lonely walk.

“Have you seen him—have you spoken with him?” were the eager questions put by Edward to his approaching friend—questions, which had been repeated every time of their meeting since the project had been in agitation.

“I have, at last!” replied Henry.

“And the result?” demanded Edward.

“Not exactly what I could have desired for your sake; but you must be patient, time may yet work wonders.”

“Aye, in the production of misery,” despondingly answered Edward; “but, tell me, what said he? Did he not become sensible of the ungenerous part he is acting?”

“On the contrary;” replied Henry, “he appears to me to suppose that he is inclined to act most generously towards you; he talked of retiring from business—of making you a present of the time you have yet to serve; as also, of a sum of money to enable you to commence on your own account; nay, in his apparent anxiety for your welfare, he has even gone so far, as to notice a place for your business.”

“Oh, Henry!” said Edward, “how vile and worthless does generosity appear, when we perceive the motive from which it arises is based

on selfishness; he would do all this which he talks of to forward my views in the world, as a sort of compromise, for robbing me of a prize that my heart holds dearer than the world itself."

"From what has taken place, respecting my sister," said Henry, "I feel myself very awkwardly situated, and unable to speak so freely as I otherwise might have done."

"Do not fear to speak out;" answered Edward, "I hope I know you too well, to suppose for a moment, that whatever you may advise will have anything of selfishness in it."

"You may trust me, I think," observed Henry.

"What then, shall I do?" inquired Edward.

"You must not think," replied his friend, "that my having spoken to Mr. Layton has rendered the matter, in any manner, more desperate than it was before; it has only served to assure

you of that which you previously suspected. He will do anything for you, but that which justice and your future happiness require of him. But, we know that he is an open-minded generous man in other respects, and, doubtless, would yet be so in this, if we could by any possible means, convince him that he is acting unjustly."

"Can you talk with hope of convincing him, while his refusal to listen to you is yet echoing in your ears?"

"You appear to have lost sight of one very important part of the subject," replied Henry; "you should remember, that he now considers himself to stand, with respect to Susan's affections, in quite as advantageous a position as yourself. You know you told me, some days since, that you sadly feared, that Susan had given him some encouragement."

"But, I told you," said Edward, passionately, "that she was to be pitied, even if she had: for

that, from her manner, it was certain she had been driven to it by their heartless proceedings."

"If you could prove that to be really the case," observed his friend, "so that Mr. Layton might be convinced of the fact, I have much hope, even now, that his generous nature would point out a duty his honesty would urge him to perform. But how can you hope to convince him, if Susan has withdrawn her confidence from you?"

"Do not—pray do not," exclaimed Edward, "employ your imagination in embodying my most unhappy, most miserable thoughts."

"I am very anxious," replied Henry, soothingly, "to have you thoroughly understand your present position; which, if you could, I might then argue—"

"Do not talk of arguing;" cried Edward, interrupting him; "I cannot argue; my whole soul has entered into this one absorbing passion:

and what can my poor weak reason do against that? No! I will rather see Mr. Layton—tell him what I feel—what I suffer; and, if necessary, upbraid him with his ungenerous conduct; and then fly on the wings of the wind from Marshend and all its associations, rather than witness this hateful consummation of my unhappiness!”

As he finished speaking, he hurried on a little distance in advance, but soon resumed his former pace, apparently exhausted with the fury of his passion. In a few seconds, he turned to his friend and said; “Forgive me, Henry, if I have spoken intemperately or with unkindness—”

He could say no more—his voice grew husky with emotion; and seizing his friend by the hand, he held it a moment as in a vice; then cried, “God bless you, Henry—good night;” and ran from his side.

Henry followed him in the distance, fearful of his intention, but when he saw him approach

Mr. Layton's door, and after a few moments hesitation, enter, he turned to his own lodging satisfied that nothing rash need be feared from him, at least, for the present.

The next morning Edward learning that Mr. Layton was going to leave home on a visit, for a few days, resolved to embrace the opportunity of speaking to him before his departure. But, if he was anxious to speak, his master was equally so to prevent him; and, therefore, made a point of avoiding him as much as possible. This, however, did not alarm Edward; he knew, at least he believed, that Mr. Layton would, according to his usual custom, see him before he left home, to give him the necessary instructions as to what was to be done during his absence. I will speak to him, then, thought Edward—I am resolved he shall not escape me. But, alas, he did escape him; the instructions were left in writing, and Edward saw him leave

the house, without having had the least explanation with him respecting the subject; which, like a vulture, was feeding on his heart.

“Every day serves but to increase my wretchedness,” said he to Henry, the next time they met; “I feel that my situation must be more irksome than the closest prisoner’s; I am at liberty, without the least chance of exercising it; I have youth, strength, and vigour, yet feel myself an outcast in the world; while every noble aspiration of my heart is swallowed up in disappointment and misery.”

“You are more desponding than usual to-day,” observed his friend.

“And have I not cause?” asked Edward, with a bitterness of expression which words cannot describe. “If I were to go to Field-hill, I should be prevented from seeing her; if I were to write, how know I that she would receive the letter; or, if she did, that

the answer would not be dictated by them?"

Then with his open hands, striking his forehead, with an energy that surprised and startled his companion, he exclaimed, "Oh God! preserve my reason, or I am lost, lost for ever!"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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